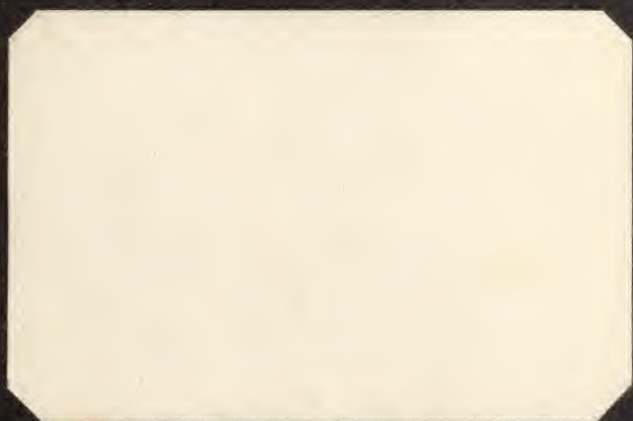


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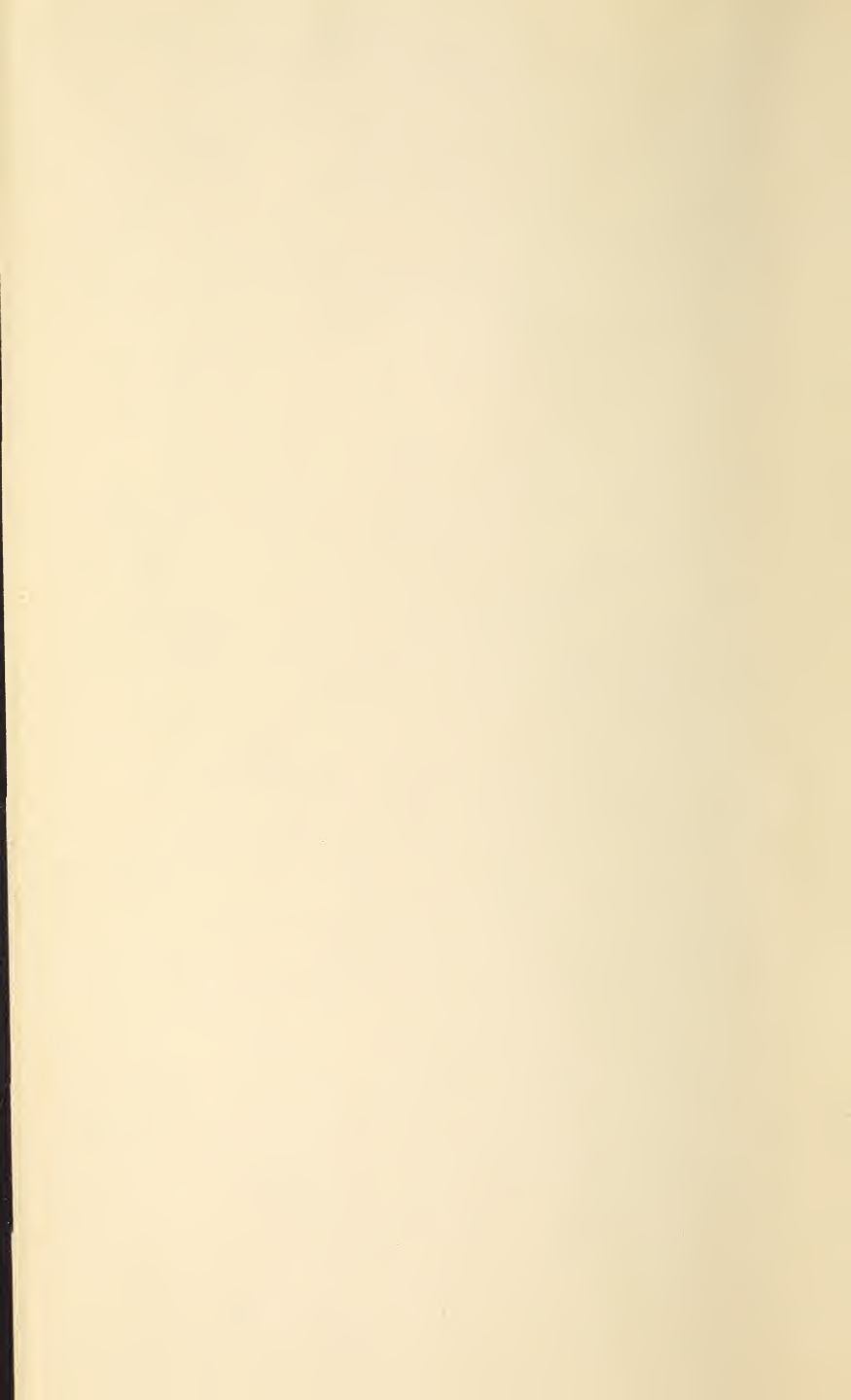


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The
SoupTureen
and other
Duologues



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THE SOUP TUREEN

AND OTHER

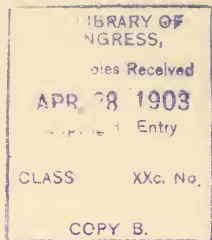
DUOLOGUES AND DIALOGUES

TRANSLATED BY MEMBERS OF THE
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NOTE.

There is no change of scenery in these plays. The division of the text into "scenes" merely follows the French literary custom, and indicates no interruption of the action whatever. The stage is set to represent an interior, but no scenery is actually necessary.

THESE PLAYS

ARE SET TO REPRESENT AN INTERIOR,

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THE SOUP TUREEN.

BY E. D'HERVILLY.

CHARACTERS.

MRS. SPOON.

MR. DE HONDURAS.

SERVANT.

Scene—A drawing-room—London.

SCENE I.

MRS. SPOON.

[*Enter Mrs. Spoon in full ball-dress—speaks, as if to somebody behind scenes.*] Theodora, you understand, do you not, that the carriage is to be here at ten o'clock? [*Looks at clock.*] Half-past nine. I shall have time to pass myself in review, as poor Colonel Spoon used to say. [*Before glass.*] Steady! not bad—and modesty itself. I shall have to follow rigidly the programme laid down by my dear Jemima. She begged me to appear at her ball this evening, simply dressed, that I might not dazzle the eyes of her unfashionable friends; so I have been obliged to take a reef in my sails, as Colonel Spoon used to say. Never

mind, I make rather a nice-looking widow yet, and could he see me even in this simple but tasteful ball-dress, I am sure my poor husband would say, "Soldier, I am satisfied with you." Poor Colonel Spoon ! Ah ! what a cruel fate it is, that takes away your husband in the flower of your . . . age. The Colonel took cold, a few months after our marriage, in returning one evening from his club. It was nothing at first, but science took hold of it. The faculty soon passed sentence upon him. At last, one morning he took a dose, and a few minutes afterwards medical science was satisfied. [*After a moment of pensive thought, she draws aside the window curtains, and looks into the darkness outside.*] Still raining ! What a horrid winter ! Dark as pitch ! Not a star to be seen ! As Theodora, my maid, says, one would really think that the poverty-stricken angels had pawned the stars, this month. [*Laughs.*] I'm thinking of that imbecile, that queer good-natured little fellow, with the eyes of a pelican sacrificing itself for its young—that man whom I've been continually meeting in the streets for the last week. I declare, I should be perfectly happy if he got the whole or even a part of this tremendous shower on his noble shoulders ! That would cool down his ardor, I should think. [*A knock, L.*] Well, what is it ? [*Enter Servant, with wailer.*] I told you I wanted the carriage at ten o'clock !

Servant. I beg your pardon, madam, but a gentleman wishes to speak with you on urgent business.

Mrs. Spoon. But I gave orders that I was engaged.

Servant. I told him so, but he begged me to give you this card. [*Gives card.*]

Mrs. Spoon [*reading card*]. "Wilfrid de Honduras." Honduras! I don't know Honduras! Let me see! Yes! now I come to think of it, I'm sure I have seen the name in the newspaper. Honduras! Oh! now I know! It's that foreigner—it's that South American who—that's it—a famous bric-a-brac hunter. What can he want of me? Suppose I send him back to his bric-a-brac? "Most urgent business!" Oh, well, Joseph, show him in. [*Aside.*] Didn't Eve admit that the serpent came to see her—out of curiosity? [*Exit Servant. She sits down and seems lost in thought.*] De Honduras! I have never even asked what this inhabitant of the New World looked like! What a singular visit! What on earth can I have to do with an ex-Indian who buys old cracked china at auction?

SCENE II.

MRS. SPOON—DE HONDURAS.

[*Enter De Honduras in evening dress.*]

De Honduras. Madame.

Mrs. Spoon [*with a little scream of surprise*]. Ah! [*Aside.*] The man with the eyes of a devoted pelican. This is too much! [*Aloud, pointing to the door, angrily.*] I beg, sir, that——

De Honduras [*aside*]. She recognizes me. [*Aloud.*] Have pity, madame——

Mrs. Spoon. Go, sir—or you will compel an unprotected woman to use the stronger means that a touch of this bell will call to her aid.

De Honduras. Listen to me, madame—only one word. In the name of all that you hold most dear! In the name of your collection! One word!

Mrs. Spoon [*aside, while De H., drawn by irresistible curiosity, stealthily examines the ornaments about the room*]. The man is crazy! and yet there's nothing very alarming about him. He is well enough dressed. The carriage has not come—but, still . . . Joseph is on the watch. Well, let him speak. [*Aloud.*] Sir, you have entered a private house at night; but as you did not break in, you may speak. I will listen to you.

De Honduras. Madame, I shall not attempt to give you a complete picture of my horrible position; I shall give a simple sketch—a mere outline.

Mrs. Spoon [*pointing to chair*]. Profit by your victory, sir; sit down.

De Honduras [*bows and sits*]. To begin, then, I am that miserable being—that unknown intruder—that wandering Christian—who for the last week has thrown himself in your path—as disagreeable, perhaps, as orange-peel, but surely not so dangerous.

Mrs. Spoon [*dryly*]. To the point, if you please.

De Honduras. The unrelieved contempt you show for one of the most respectful of men, madame, will, I am sure, be softened, when you learn that my motive in calling upon you is entirely proper. Yes, madame, the sky of June is not purer than the

depths of my heart. My name is Wilfrid de Honduras——

Mrs. Spoon. I know it. If I may believe the best reports, you are a mad collector of china.

De Honduras [*interrupting*]. Why! I have never bitten any one——

Mrs. Spoon [*sneeringly*]. Ah! I remember, now. It was you who paid five hundred pounds for a mustard pot—an old Marseille——

De Honduras. The mustard is perhaps a slight exaggeration; but I certainly did give five hundred pounds for the jar—to whatever uses it may once have been forced to submit.

Mrs. Spoon. I beg, sir, that you will come to the point.

De Honduras. Very well, madame, shall I tear aside the veil still further?

Mrs. Spoon. Tear, sir, but tear quickly.

De Honduras [*rises*]. Well, then, the event took place in London. It was on a beautiful day of last month, about noon. It rained, but only in torrents. I was at an auction sale of old china, which had been collected by an ardent lover of such things—Mr. Montague. I bid for a superb soup tureen—a most exquisite thing—nearly two hundred years old—for it dated from the time when Louis XIV., after having sent his silver service to the Mint, “was considering whether he should not take to china,” according to Saint Simon. Oh! what a tureen! Madame, the festoons and fillets, the mantlings and foliage with which it was ornamented, would have rejoiced

the heart of Bernard de Palissy himself. Moreover, it was covered with armorial bearings, a thing that is most unusual !

Mrs. Spoon [*aside*]. He really is stark mad !
[*Aloud.*] Let us be serious, sir.

De Honduras. I am as serious as Pluto himself ; but to be brief. This tureen was knocked down to me for £1,720 and some pence, which I shall not trouble you by mentioning.

Mrs. Spoon [*laughing*]. Thank you, thank you !

De Honduras [*sadly*]. And this tureen ; this dream of my youth ; this consolation of my riper years ; this tureen had been bereaved of its cover—widowed, madame !

Mrs. Spoon [*coldly*]. A most heart-rending story ; but I can do nothing to help it ; and, as I suppose, sir, that all this is the result of a wager, I will acknowledge that you have won. [*Points to the door.*]

De Honduras. Would you drive me away, most cruel of your sex ?

Mrs. Spoon [*angrily*]. Good heavens ! I've not got your cover !

De Honduras. A terrible mistake, madame, terrible !

Mrs. Spoon. What do you mean ?

De Honduras [*quickly*]. Not a word—I know all ! The cover is here ! You bought it a month ago, at our friend Chapman's, the china merchant's, as a hanging vase for your conservatory. Am I not right ? That cover—if it has been correctly described to me—that cover, madame, is mine ! Chap-

man did not know your name or your address, but one day, when I was in his shop, you passed by, and he exclaimed, "There she is! the lady with the cover!" With the fleetness and accuracy of the chamois I followed your footsteps over streets and bridges. But, alas! like the chimera of the poet, you eluded me for a whole week, vanishing into all sorts of shops each time that I hoped to reach you and to implore you to sell me your cover, at no matter what price. At last, I have found where you live, and I appear before you, as urgent and pale as the ghost of the Commendatore.

Mrs. Spoon. This is clearly an advanced stage of insanity!

De Honduras [*violently*]. Ah, madame, it is evident that you do not collect! You do not know this devouring passion! While we are searching for a missing piece, we feel in us the blood of the Indian tracking his enemy along the war-path, to take his scalp and hang it proudly at the door of his wigwam! and I have sworn to get your cover! A tureen without its cover is like the solitary palm that sighs as the wind passes it by; like Paul, two thousand leagues from his Virginia; like one of the Siamese twins separated from his brother; like a Laplander deprived of his reindeer. In heaven's name, madame, sell me your cover!

Mrs. Spoon [*aside, looking alarmed*]. I am horribly frightened. [*Aloud.*] One moment! [*Rings; enter Servant*]. Bring me the hanging flower-vase that is in the green-house. [*Exit Servant.*]

De Honduras. Oh ! is it possible [*with great delight*] you consent—— ?

Mrs. Spoon. To give up this cover ? Certainly.

De Honduras. Certainly, you say ? Ah ! how enchanting that adverb sounds to my ears. Words fail me to express the pleasure I——

Mrs. Spoon. Do not try, I beg !

De Honduras. I obey. But at least, madame, tell me the price you set on this rare article ?

Mrs. Spoon. Oh, I set no price. I will give it to you.

De Honduras. You give me—a real Rouen ? A—you—[*with sudden suspicion*]—but perhaps the enamel is scratched ? Some hidden flaw ?

Mrs. Spoon. No, the piece is perfect. [*Noise heard of broken china.*] At least it was perfect a minute ago, but now, alas, I fear——

De Honduras. Heavens ! What do I hear ? What a blow ? My—your—in fact *our* cover—I feel very ill, madame—I—real Rouen—come—I—broken into a thousand pieces—ah ! ah ! [*Faints*].

Mrs. Spoon [*fairly stupefied*]. Good heavens ! This caps the climax ! Sir, sir ! Oh ! what a fearful adventure. Sir, I implore you to come to life again ! This is perfectly horrible ! And if he should die here ! Sir ! A corpse with me at this time of night [*growing more and more excited*], and when there's so little room, too. Sir ! This is a most irregular proceeding, sir ! I'll try slapping his hands ! [*Administers this ancient and honorable remedy.*] Sir ! Dear Mr. de Honduras, revive once more ! For

heaven's sake ! And the ball ! Oh, dear, the bail ! What shall I do ? and I can't unlace him either ! Ah ! at such a critical moment how useful the Colonel would have been ! [*De H. makes a movement.*] There ! He is coming to life ! Saved !

De Honduras [*opening his eyes*]. Where am I ? Oh ! it is you, madame ! What has happened ? Oh ! I recollect ! The cover ! [*Shows signs of renewed faintness.*]

Mrs. Spoon [*alarmed*]. Heavens ! is he going to faint again ? Sir——

De Honduras. It's over—I feel better. Thanks——

Mrs. Spoon. Do you really feel better ? Would you like a glass of water ?

De Honduras. Thank you, I should. [*Scornfully examines the tumbler that she brings, and mutters, "Imitation Venetian !" then drinks.*] Ah ! now I feel completely—repaired. What excuse can I make to you, madame ? But you see my nervous system has become so frightfully sensitive since—— [*He takes his hat and is going.*]

Mrs. Spoon [*with an air of curiosity*]. Since when ?

De Honduras. Since the breaking of an engagement which promised to overwhelm me with happiness.

Mrs. Spoon. I am sorry to have been the innocent cause——

De Honduras [*sitting*]. How kind you are ! It would be a great relief to my feelings, if you would let me give you a few confidential details of my life.

Mrs. Spoon [*aside*]. This is too much. The man takes too much advantage of his condition. The ball ! the ball ! [*Aloud.*] I am very sorry, but I have an engagement.

De Honduras. Two words will suffice. My story is simple. Several years ago, I was made most happy——

Mrs. Spoon. I am very sorry, sir—I regret extremely—but I cannot wait any longer. A ball, given to celebrate the wedding——

De Honduras. A wedding was just what I was coming to ; mine, by-the-by ; but which never took place, for the young lady who was ripening for me upon the family tree—if I may be allowed the simile——

Mrs. Spoon. Really, sir——

De Honduras. In short, Miss Morville, although she was not acquainted with me——

Mrs. Spoon [*aside*]. Who did he say ? Miss Morville ! [*Aloud.*] Did you say Miss Morville ?

De Honduras. Yes, madame—I was going to marry that young lady. Our witnesses—our parents, I mean—had arranged it for us. But before I could throw myself at her feet, breathing the tenderest expressions of affection, the dear, capricious child had given her white and precious hand to a rich foreigner——

Mrs. Spoon. To a foreigner ? [*Aside.*] How strange ! [*Aloud.*] Poor Mr. de Honduras !

De Honduras. Say rather, poor Mr. de Stromberg, for Honduras is a fictitious name—I adopted it for

the sake of guarding the strictest incognito in my relations with the agents of the auction rooms. Yes, madame, I am the unfortunate Hector de Stromberg.

Mrs. Spoon [*aside*]. Can it be possible that this is the young man! Why, he was the Colonel's unknown rival! he whom I refused to marry—What a coincidence!

De Honduras. I do not blame Miss Morville. She did not know me, I had never seen her. Therefore there was nothing heart-breaking, to her at least, in the rupture of our engagement. As for me, I had built upon this marriage—a whole castle in the air. Ah! I was sadly deceived.

Mrs. Spoon [*aside*]. Poor fellow! [*Aloud*]. How you must hate this treacherous girl!

De Honduras. I have treasured no bitter feeling towards her. But her refusal of me, without motive, gave me such a blow as struck to the depths of my soul! This is why I have plunged into the ceramic art in the flower of my years!

Mrs. Spoon [*aside*]. The Colonel himself, had he been in this young man's place, would not have grieved more for me, I am convinced. [*Aloud*]. Into the ceramic art, did you say?

De Honduras. Yes, madame—and up to my neck in it—and by so doing, I have been able to preserve my deep respect for the sex of which I considered Miss Morville—until I had the pleasure of meeting you, madame—the choicest specimen. At least, I said to myself, I shall never be able to say of woman

what Hamlet thought of them. In all my sorrows I will say only, "Frailty, thy name is—china."

Mrs. Spoon. And you are still—unmarried?

De Honduras. As Paris, the shepherd——

Mrs. Spoon. Ah! then perhaps, in spite of your grief, you have distributed a few apples here and there?

De Honduras. Seldom, madame, I assure you. Paris, in every respect, is far from Mount Ida.

Mrs. Spoon. I beg your pardon. Excuse my want of tact. Have you never heard of Miss Morville since?

De Honduras. Never! The rich foreigner she preferred to me, is, I am told, a colonel in the American militia—his name, I think, is—Fork.

Mrs. Spoon [*laughing*]. You are mistaken. His name was Spoon.

De Honduras [*carelessly*]. I beg pardon—Ah! the worthy Yankee's name is Spoon, eh?

Mrs. Spoon [*angrily*]. Respect the memory of my husband, sir!

De Honduras [*suddenly enlightened*]. The memory of your husband? Spoon was your husband! and you are actually a widow—and—and—ah! then—this is Miss Morville, with whom I have the frantic joy of speaking?

Mrs. Spoon. I have betrayed myself! Yes, you have come to Colonel Spoon's widow for a cover.

De Honduras [*with intense joy*]. Oh! miracles of the ceramic art—I see all now!

Mrs. Spoon. All? What do you mean, Mr. Hector?

De Honduras. You call me Hector? Ah! that name from your pretty lips effaces years of sorrow. Yes, I understand it all, now. While I was in ardent pursuit of that Golden Fleece in china, which now lies broken into a thousand bits, while I followed you persistently night and day—in the streets, at the theatre—Ah! madame, the sweetest, tenderest feelings gradually entered my soul! After three days of vain pursuit, my heart no longer held a tureen, but your adored image only!

Mrs. Spoon. Mr. Hector!

De Honduras. Every look that you gave me showed but too plainly your utter contempt for me, and from the madly enthusiastic collector I became the ardent but despairing lover. Ah! how happy I am to have found in the fascinating unknown, towards whom I was so irresistibly drawn, the widow Spoon!

Mrs. Spoon. Mr. Hector!

De Honduras. Yes, I reproached myself with my infidelity to the memory of Miss Morville, and if the collector had not often whispered to the lover "Courage," I firmly believe that neither the one nor the other would ever have the happiness that they now have, of throwing themselves at your feet, imploring you to give them——

Mrs. Spoon. My dear friend——

De Honduras [*much excited*]. Pardon my boldness! Look favorably upon this strange adventure, and deign—to complete my collection. Oh! forgive me, I've lost my head—deign to reward my long constancy. Yes, one word from you will efface the

remembrance of all that I have suffered. I ask you, with tears of joy, madame, and smiles of hope, to give me your cover—your charming hand, I mean.

Mrs. Spoon. My dear friend ! After my servant's carelessness just now, in breaking so valuable a piece, what can I reply to the collector ?

De Honduras. Devil take the collection ! What is china to me now ? I love you !

Mrs. Spoon. This earnest appeal deserves an honest reward ; but my poor friend, what am I—a sad widow ! I bring you a broken heart——

De Honduras [*perfectly beside himself*]. I'll have it riveted !

Mrs. Spoon. My heart !

De Honduras. No, cruel woman. I don't know what I'm saying.

Mrs. Spoon. I should think not, when your beautiful dream is in pieces. Do you no longer think of it ? What could repay you for it ?

De Honduras [*in transport*]. I will console it

Mrs. Spoon. My cover ?

De Honduras. No, no, your heart. The pieces are good.

Mrs. Spoon [*laughing*]. Of my heart ?

De Honduras. Oh ! for heaven's sake, let us stop these cross purposes. The day is won—the cover has fallen, the collector has vanished, and the lover remains ! I adore you !

Mrs. Spoon [*wickedly*]. Even without the cover ?

De Honduras [*rises*]. With all my tureen ! [*Knock at the door.*]

Mrs. Spoon. Well? What is it? [*Enter Servant.*]

Servant. The cover that you bought the other day, ma'am, has been taken to the jeweler to be mounted, ma'am.

Mrs. Spoon. What was that noise then that I heard just now?

Servant. A *jardinière*, that your dog, ma'am, knocked over. Your carriage is ready, ma'am. [*Exit.*]

Mrs. Spoon. Well, Mr. Hector—what do you say to that? Your cover is not broken.

De Honduras. I am sorry for it! For now I suppose you will send us both away, one in the arms of the other, and then I shall certainly die.

Mrs. Spoon. "Certainly"—you have returned my "enchanting adverb." No, Hector, I shall not send you away; but I must leave you, until to-morrow. This evening I am going to a ball given to celebrate the wedding of my friend Jemima Doughty, a com-patriot of the—late Colonel.

De Honduras. Miss Jemima, who is to be married to Sir Robert Gravesend?

Mrs. Spoon. The same.

De Honduras. That being the case, I shall beg for a seat in your carriage. (*Draws from his pocket a wedding invitation.*) My invitation (*pointing to his dress suit*) and my evening dress must emphatically prove to you that I too am going to a ball—that ball is given by my friend, Sir Robert Gravesend.

Mrs. Spoon. What a delightful coincidence! Are you well acquainted with him?

De Honduras. Intimately. We were both sick to-

gether on the same boat, from Calais to Dover. Such things create a life-long tie, and besides he is a collector of china. His wife will be very happy.

Mrs. Spoon. That we shall see ! In the meantime, I will give you with pleasure a seat in my carriage or coach, Mr. Hector. And the cover ? What orders shall I give about that ?

De Honduras. Let it be placed upon the sideboard in your dining-room, and perhaps some day my tureen will join it, with your consent.

Mrs. Spoon. I shall expect you to cultivate my taste for the ceramic art, Hector.

THE UNLUCKY STAR.

BY JULES GUILLEMOI.

CHARACTERS.

PASTOREL.

MARIUS CABASSOL.

SCENE I.

Room in a hotel.

Pastorel [*alone, seated at a table preparing to write*].
I must write to my relations in the south. They'll be surprised to hear of my return, after not hearing from me for so many years.—What a draught ! [*Goes to window, looks out, and then shuts it.*] That gentleman opposite is still at his window ; he can't have much to do. [*He sits down and is about to commence his letter.*] The...what is the day of the month ? [*Looks at almanac hanging on the wall.*] Havre, July 17, 1877—[*Loud knocking.*]

SCENE II.

PASTOREL—MARIUS CABASSOL.

Cabassol [*entering excitedly*]. Excuse me, sir, but was it you who slammed the window so violently?

Pastorel [*calmly*]. I shut my window just now, but I am not aware that I slammed it violently.

Cabassol. Excuse me, sir, excuse me, but you did slam it violently. I was at my window. [*Points to window.*] There, sir! opposite; you're on the second floor of this hotel, I on the third. You look out on the street and on the court-yard, whereas my lookout is only on the court-yard. Life is full of injustice. For want of something better to do, I thought I would amuse myself [*with a sarcastic smile*] by looking on the court-yard of a hotel (if that can be called amusement); I happened to look in this direction, and saw you writing—why, there is the very letter. [*Points to letter, and knocks on table.*] I was looking at you very innocently—I don't think there is any rudeness in looking at a person writing thirty feet off—it was then you got up and slammed the window violently. . . . I am not sensitive, and am naturally good-tempered, but your proceeding appeared to me most insulting, and I come to ask you if it was intentional on your part.

Pastorel. Not at all, sir—I did it to avoid a draught! and because the wind blew my paper away. [*Aside.*] What a queer fellow this is! He is very annoying.

Cabassol. You assure me you had no other motive?

Pastorel. I assure you.

Cabassol. On your honor?

Pastorel [*smiling in spite of himself*]. On my honor.

Cabassol [*to himself*]. Then I suppose I must apologize. That's very disgusting!--[*Aloud.*] Sir! I bid you good morning—I leave you without the slightest ill feeling. [*Starts to go out.*]

Pastorel [*calling him back*]. Sir!

Cabassol [*returning instantly*]. No, sir, no! I'm perfectly satisfied—I avoid quarrels as much as I can, being of a peaceful disposition—notwithstanding which I am constantly embroiling myself. I can't help thinking that I was born under an unlucky star—Oh! if I were to tell you the history of my life!...

Pastorel. Oh! I will not detain you, and I, you see... [*Shows his half-written letter.*]

Cabassol. That's nothing, I've plenty of time. [*He sits.*]

Pastorel [*aside*]. This is too much—he has settled himself for the day!

Cabassol. I am from the south!

Pastorel. I can see that, sir.

Cabassol [*irritably*]. How can you see that, sir?

Pastorel. No offence! I am from the south myself.

Cabassol. I should never have supposed it.

Pastorel. But, I have been away thirty years.

Cabassol. And I, sir, have scarcely ever been away from there.

Pastorel. And yet, you are here in Havre.

Cabassol. Do you want me to remain in one spot forever ?

Pastorel. I had no idea . . .

Cabassol. I accept your apologies . . . As I told you, I was born in the south—I will not go back beyond my birth . . .

Pastorel [*aside*]. I hope not.

Cabassol. I will speak but briefly of my infancy . . . my first tooth . . .

Pastorel [*appalled*]. Suppose we go to the second ?

Cabassol [*irritably*]. Excuse me, sir ! If I weary you, say so.

Pastorel. On the contrary, you amuse me.

Cabassol. What do you mean ?

Pastorel. I mean, that you do not weary me.

Cabassol. Then, you should not look as if I did ! Where was I ? Oh ! the teeth. Are you a father of a family ?

Pastorel. Alas ! no !

Cabassol. You do not realize how happy you are ! I do ! but as you are not a father, I will pass the teeth. [*Pastorel shows signs of being pleased—Cabassol sees them.*] When I say I will pass——

Pastorel. He is decidedly original, but very disagreeable.

Cabassol. I come to my examination in elocution. Now you will see my bad luck ! I competed for the prize of honor, and I got it.

Pastorel. I can't say that I see——

Cabassol. You'll see, you'll see ! They gave me the works of Molière, beautifully bound.

Pastorel. Well ?

Cabassol. Wait ! and the works of Masillon. Well, sir, I had the works of Masillon in my library ! Wasn't that bad luck, eh?...and that's nothing. When I was eighteen years old... [*Stops suddenly, and says, pointing to letter on table.*] But put that away !

Pastorel. What for ?

Cabassol. It bothers me, I can't go on with my story comfortably. It seems to say to me : Aren't you ever going to get through with that story ? [*Pastorel puts letter in drawer. Cabassol continues.*] When I was eighteen, I went up for my examination...

Pastorel. And you were rejected ?

Cabassol. No ! I passed with the greatest ease.

Pastorel. But then ?...

Cabassol. Wait ! I passed easily ; but I had only four white balls, and my friend Balthazar had five ! It's always that way ! At twenty-eight, I was married... Oh ! if it was only to do over again !... well, I married a lovely woman !...

Pastorel. Good !

Cabassol. I should say a woman whom all the world called lovely. I... well, you know she was my wife ! Besides which, she had two hundred thousand francs.

Pastorel. Well ?

Cabassol. But wait ! Six months after, Balthazar

married a woman with two hundred and fifty thousand francs. I ought to have had that, oughtn't I? . . . Well, no—it was for Balthazar! Always my luck, my infernal bad luck! [*Breaks paper-knife while gesticulating.*]

Pastorel. Take care, sir, you have broken my paper-knife.

Cabassol. There's nothing to be surprised at in that; my hand's unlucky...everything about me is unlucky——

Pastorel. If it belonged to me!...But it belongs to the hotel.

Cabassol. That's all right; they'll put it in your bill...Ah! I forgot the most astonishing proof of my bad luck. My wife had some tickets in the grand lottery; one of them came out a prize of ten thousand francs.

Pastorel. That was superb.

Cabassol. You think that superb, do you? Well, listen! I had 340,600. Now, what do you think drew the great prize, 100,000 francs? No. 340,601! Yes, sir! Yes, sir! it's incredible!...I ought to be used to it; it has been the same thing since my childhood——

Pastorel. Since your first tooth?

Cabassol. Yes, since my first tooth. When I take an umbrella it is sure to be a fine day; if I go out with my cane it rains in torrents. Now, you never heard of such things happening to any one but me——

Pastorel [*with an incredulous air*]. Oh!

Cabassol. If I run after an omnibus, it's sure to be

full ; and I have observed that this has happened most frequently on rainy days. It's a fatality ! If I were invited to see an eclipse at the Observatory, I might just as well stay at home—it would certainly be all over before I could get there.

Pastorel. And they wouldn't do it over again for you !

Cabassol [*thoughtlessly and with rage*]. Do it over again ! [*Seeing his mistake.*] Ah ! you are laughing at me, sir ! If that's the case, I'll say no more ; but I'll see you again, sir. [*He starts to go out.*]

Pastorel. Sir !

Cabassol [*aside*]. He seems delighted to get rid of me. I'll stay. [*Aloud.*] I have made up my mind ; I can't fight with you. With my luck, if you were the worst swordsman in the world, you would run me through immediately, and I have no wish to have my property divided amongst my heirs. I had rather live to get my share of other people's estates.

Pastorel. What a beast !

Cabassol. There's my bad luck again ! Balthazar had two aunts and two cousins, he buried them all . . . They were only forty-five years old. There's luck. Now, I have neither uncle nor aunt, nor cousin nor . . . Stop though [*thinking*]. Yes ! I have an uncle in America.

Pastorel. Oh ! oh !

Cabassol. Yes, I know people laugh at uncles in America. But still there are some, and some of these have come back, too. But mine never has come back, and never will. No, sir ! he never will.

[*While saying this he gesticulates volently with glass weight.*]

Pastorel. Take care, sir ! You are going to smash my paper-weight.

Cabassol. Never mind ! they'll put it on your bill.

Pastorel. So you have got an uncle in America. Allow me to ask what is the name of your birth-place ?

Cabassol. I live at Andance.

Pastorel. Where's Andance ?

Cabassol. Opposite Andancette.

Pastorel. And where's Andancette ?

Cabassol. What a question ! Why opposite Andance . . . A Frenchman never knows anything about geography.

Pastorel [*to himself.*] I know as much now as I did before.

Cabassol. But that is my wife's country. I am from Martigues, near Marseilles—

Pastorel [*aside*]. From Martigues—it is he, no doubt ! [*Aloud.*] And what was your uncle's name ?

Cabassol. Pastorel, the old scoundrel ! old . . . he was young when he went away ; but that's a long time ago, he ought to be old now. There is no doubt he was a man of very bad habits, and must have squandered all he made in dissipation, unless the savages ate him—I hope they did ! . . . But what makes you so curious ? Did you ever know him ?

Pastorel. Yes, I knew the old scoundrel, as you call him. What would he say if he heard you ?

Cabassol [*uneasy*]. You look like—a very good

man. I'm sure you would not repeat my idle words. Then you know him ? and he was not eaten ?

Pastorel. No ! nor his money either.

Cabassol. No ?

Pastorel. That seems to interest you ?

Cabassol. To be sure it does !

Pastorel. Yes, you seem very much interested. Well ! when I saw him he was thinking of coming here.

Cabassol. You don't say so !

Pastorel. With a fortune of two hundred thousand dollars.

Cabassol. Two hundred thousand dollars ! Dear uncle !

Pastorel. He could easily have doubled it, if he had chosen.

Cabassol. And he didn't choose ! Why ? Why not ?

Pastorel. He felt so weary and lonely ; he thought he would rather see his country and relations again before he became enfeebled by age.

Cabassol. Well ! there's my luck again ! two hundred thousand dollars that I lose in one stroke ! I shall never get over it.

Pastorel. You'll not lose it.

Cabassol. How ?

Pastorel. I say, you'll not lose it, Mr. Cabassol.

Cabassol. You know my name ?

Pastorel. Oh ! he often talked to me about you. But to lose this money, you would have to be the heir of Pastorel.

Cabassol. What nonsense ! I am his only near relative.

Pastorel. But his money is his own, and he can leave it——

Cabassol [*furious*]. He can! . . . Ah, if I thought ! . . .

Pastorel Think so, Mr. Marius Cabassol, think so . . . and let me tell you, that when we are unhappy in this world, nine times out of ten, it is our own fault—and what we call our bad luck, is our bad disposition.

Cabassol. Is that meant for me ?

Pastorel. A little, my dear nephew.

Cabassol. What ! you are——

Pastorel. Your uncle ! I am.

Cabassol [*overcome; then says*] Well—this time at least, you acknowledge that I have had bad luck.
[*Smashes his hat on his head and goes out.*]

SCENE III.

PASTOREL, alone.

Pastorel. And that is my nephew ! And I have come three thousand miles to make his acquaintance !

LELIA.

BY OCTAVE GASTINEAU.

CHARACTERS.

COUNTESS LELIA, *an Italian.*

SIR HUGH STANLEY.

London—At the residence of Lady Emily Fielding, on the night of a ball. Small room, serving for dressing-room; dressing table, lamps, chairs, etc.

SCENE I.

LELIA.

Lelia [*enters, wrapped in opera cloak, speaking to some one behind the scenes*]. You understand, Beppo? Go home for my carriage, and come back with it as quickly as you can. [*Shutting door, enters.*] I won't stay any longer at this horrid ball! I can't imagine why Emily will dance on a Friday!—a fast-day—the 13th of the month, too! These gay people never respect anything—not even a superstition! I

should have acted on my presentiments ; they never deceive me—and I've had a very strong one. About a week ago, in my own house at Rome, I was awakened by Zerlina, who as usual brought me my chocolate and my English letters. Amongst them was one from dear Lady Emily. Quick, Zerlina, and help me dress, I called out. In her eagerness and hurry she put my left slipper on my right foot. When I called her attention to this evil omen, she insisted that she had made no mistake. I opened my dear Emily's letter. "Come quickly, my dear child ; I have found the hero of your dreams ! Sir Roger Buford, age twenty-five, handsome, rich, clever, with beautiful teeth and hair, and still preserving the dreams and illusions of youth ; he is a real fairy-tale hero, and wants but two things in the world—to be attaché of the legation at Rome, and to marry a charming widow. My uncle, the ambassador, has promised me his nomination, but you alone . . . or I, can give Roger his second wish. I love him even to sacrificing myself—but I warn you not to delay, for my devotion is so sublime that it can't last long, and if you hesitate for a moment I shall keep your hero for myself." I set out at once ; I arrived in London. Emily kissed me and said, "Roger is delighted. There is to be a dance at my house to-night, where you will see him." I entered the ball-room at ten o'clock, and asked her to introduce him, but he had not yet arrived ; I waited until midnight—and he was the only one in London who was not there. Such an insult . . . to me ! Countess Lelia ! I should

have cried with rage, if I had not known that would have delighted my friends. I have just left Emily, in spite of her earnest request that I should stay longer. I have only this moment discovered, as Beppo handed it to me, how frightful my opera-cloak is—and last year's fashion! I am hiding in this dressing-room, waiting for my carriage, which I did not order until two o'clock; and to-morrow I shall go back to Italy. Ah! Zerlina, why did you put my left slipper on my right foot? [*Seeing Hugh, who enters.*] There's some one coming in! [*Puts hood over head, and sits at back of stage.*]

SCENE II.

LELIA—HUGH.

Hugh [*wearing overcoat, speaks to somebody behind the scene*]. That's right, thank you. [*Seeing Lelia, bows.*] Madame...

Lelia [*aside*]. Luckily I don't know this young man.

Hugh. Some old dowager, I suppose. [*Goes to toilette table, searching.*] No, not one!

Lelia [*aside*]. What can he be looking for?

Hugh. It was very wrong of me, certainly, to have shaken hands with Bentley, who has the evil eye, and brings misfortune to all who come near him.

Lelia [*aside*]. He seems to be worried about something.

Hugh. The left eye, too ! I was particularly anxious to get to the duchess's early this evening—as I hoped to see the ambassador, who, I suppose, must have gone by this time—for these functionaries are always coming and going in a ball-room, fearing the nightly attacks of petitioners ! I left the club at ten o'clock, dressed myself, and waited for my barber until half-past eleven. Now I know why bald men are always punctual ! While Frederick was curling my hair, I sent for a carriage, but only one could be found—a horrid, old, dirty rattle-trap—which covered me with dust. I fortunately discovered my condition before entering the ball-room. [*Half opens overcoat, and looks at clothes.*]

SCENE III.

LELIA.

Lelia [*aside, laughing*]. Ha ! ha ! ha !

Hugh. I asked for a brush, but none of the servants had one. A waiting-maid told me that I should find one in the dressing-room, but I didn't see any there. [*Looking in a drawer.*] Ah ! yes !—Pshaw ! a tooth-brush ! [*Takes off gloves, and puts overcoat on chair—a card falls from pocket of coat.*] I can't go in looking like a street-sweeper ! Who can I speak to ? I must go and look for some one !

[*Exit.*]

Lelia [*alone, laughing*]. Ha ! ha ! ha ! poor fellow ! Now, if I were wickedly inclined, I should

go back to the ball-room, expressly to spread this funny little incident—How easily people are amused ! By a few grains of dust ! This young man is very nice, and his dilemma amuses me greatly ! It has almost made me forget Sir Roger, who must resemble him somewhat, by-the-by. I'll write and ask Emily what his name is ! [*Seeing card which has fallen from Hugh's coat pocket.*] Why here's a visiting-card, which has fallen from his coat pocket—Now, I'll find out who he is ! [*Reading.*] “ Sir Roger Buford.” There ! I knew it ! My presentiments never deceive me. This, then, was the reason he was late—and there was I abusing him ! [*Laughs.*] Emily is right—his hair is beautiful...I think I won't go home ! I'll go back to my dear Emily, who will introduce him to me...or...I'll stay here alone with him. He does not know me, and I must make his acquaintance—but how shall I manage to detain him here ? [*Taking off opera-cloak.*] I wonder if I look tolerably well ! Zerlina is not here to tell me the truth...but I tell it to myself sometimes. [*Looking in glass.*] Lelia, you are simply bewitching this evening.

SCENE IV.

LELIA—HUGH.

Hugh [*enters*]. I'm dusted at last ! thank heavens ! [*Seeing Lelia, arranging flowers in her hair.*] Ah ! a lady putting the finishing touches to her towering structure ! Pardon my intrusion...

Lelia. Not at all, sir !

Hugh [*aside*]. Why, the old dowager has gone !
[*Aloud*.] I must have left my gloves here.

Lelia [*seeing gloves and hiding them*]. Ah !

Hugh [*searching*]. Where are they ? Oh ! in my overcoat, perhaps ? [*Searches*.]

Lelia [*aside*]. I've got him now, tied hand—ungloved—and foot.

Hugh [*searching*]. The effect of Bentley's evil eye still on me ! I'm sure I had them when I came up stairs.

Lelia. Are you looking for something ?

Hugh. Yes, my gloves ! Have you seen them, by any chance ?

Lelia. No ! [*smiling*] unless I mistook them for mine . . .

Hugh. Oh ! Madame ! [*Searching*.] I can't possibly enter a ball-room with no gloves.

Lelia. Do as I do, and make up your mind not to be bored by this stupid ball.

Hugh. Are you going home so early ?

Lelia. It's twelve o'clock.

Hugh. Cinderella's magic hour ! Have you the same reason ?

Lelia. Who knows !

Hugh. Then, if I should find your slipper, allow me to take it to you to-morrow ?

Lelia. A slipper is not as easily lost as a pair of gloves ; besides, our maids would not allow us to go to a ball with shoes large enough to drop off. In fact, Cinderella was only a fairy's god-child, while I——

Hugh. You are her god-mother ?

Lelia. Perhaps so.

Hugh. Everything must be possible to you, Madame Fairy.

Lelia. Not everything . . . but all that I wish.

Hugh. Then, will you find my gloves, please ?

Lelia. Pshaw ! how can you ask me to do so small a favor ?

Hugh. But I attach great importance to the finding of my gloves. Give me a proof of your supernatural powers.

Lelia. Why ! I've already given you one.

Hugh. By dazzling me with your beauty !

Lelia. No, by making me invisible to your eyes.

Hugh. Invisible ! when ?

Lelia. Just now, when I was sitting there ! You did not deign even to look at me.

Hugh. Why, was that you ?

Lelia. I took the form of an old woman, which is always the way we appear for the first time to mortals. Don't you recollect Perrault's "Stories" ?

Hugh. Oh ! yes ! and then the fairy makes a gift.

Lelia. To Prince Charming.

Hugh. Even when the mortal is neither a prince nor charming.

Lelia. Very well ; now I want to follow out ancient traditions : Prince Charming had three wishes—

Hugh. That the fairy granted.

Lelia. Yes, to punish him ; for the fulfilling of these wishes is only a deception—there being one

thing that Prince Charming always forgets to ask for—viz., happiness.

Hugh. I'd begin with that.

Lelia. Are you quite sure ; Here is a tablet !
[*Gives him her ball tablet.*] Write your three wishes upon this ivory leaf.

Hugh. Immediately ?

Lelia. No, no ! Reflect well first, and take great care not to deceive yourself.

Hugh. And then will the three wishes be fulfilled ?

Lelia. Without an instant's delay. I leave you now to your reflections.

Hugh. What ! are you going to disappear ?

Lelia. I am going back to the ball to find my sisters, [*aside*] and to tell Emily of my folly.

Hugh. Let me go with you.

Lelia. No ! I command you to stay where you are.

Hugh. Please !

Lelia [*pointing to Hugh's hands with her fan*]. I dare you to follow me.

Hugh. Oh ! I forgot.

Lelia. A fairy can never be disobeyed. Good-by for the present, beautiful Prince Charming. [*Exit laughing.*]

SCENE V.

HUGH.

Hugh [*following*]. Madame . . . [*Returning.*] Where can I find a pair of gloves ? Every shop is closed.

Suppose I wait for some polite guest, and borrow his. Your gloves or your life ! No, that would be too ridiculous, particularly if his hand should not happen to be the size of mine. I might go home and get a pair, but then she is to come back—at least she promised me that she would—and fairies, I believe, always keep their promises. I suspect she'll do something remarkable. Who is she ? I'm certain that I never met her before. A fairy ! Well, why not ? All pretty women are fairies, or have been . . . Who cares ? She is bewitching, clever . . . Well, a little too clever perhaps, for she airs her wit at my expense. She must be a wicked fairy, for she has put me into such a ridiculous position. I leave the club, put on a dress-coat and white cravat, and all for the sake of staying all the evening in the dressing-room like an over-coat or an opera-cloak. Halloa ! talking of opera-cloaks, here's hers. [*Examining it.*] It's not a very stylish one. Ah ! ha ! a pocket ! perhaps it would be rather impertinent, but pshaw ! with a fairy !

SCENE VI.

HUGH—LELIA.

Lelia [*enters, but seeing Hugh examining her cloak, hides behind the curtain.—Aside*]. Why, he's searching my pockets !

Hugh [*searching in pocket*]. A pocket-handkerchief !

Lelia [*aside*]. Zerlina's !

Hugh. No name on it ! I'll keep it as a remembrance.

Lelia [*aside*]. Zerlina will be furious.

Hugh [*still searching*]. A note ! If I only dared——

Lelia [*anxiously*]. Ah !

Hugh. No, that would be worse than impertinent.

Lelia [*aside*]. That's true !

Hugh. So she receives notes, eh ? No doubt it's a declaration of love ! Ah, after all, fairies are only women ! Here was I believing, hoping—Halloa ! I wonder if I'm getting jealous ! Unfortunately, I've got no right to be. I'd give anything in the world to know what is in that note, and it would be so easy to gratify my curiosity ! Ah ! there are moments in our lives, when great moral courage is needed to keep us from doing mean things. [*Puts back note.*]

Lelia [*aside*]. Oh ! I'm so glad !

Hugh. I must think of something else, and not let myself get tempted. Jove ! I forgot my three wishes ! This adventure is too amusing to give up. Let me see ! what do I wish ? Oh, first my gloves. [*Writes on tablet.*]

Lelia [*aside*]. I'll give them back to him.

Hugh. They are absolutely indispensable to me—for I must see Lady Emily—I have a most delicate mission to her.

Lelia [*aside*]. A delicate mission ! why does he call it a mission ?

Hugh. No doubt Lady Emily will give me information about the position I am begging for... Oh !

this will be my second wish. [*Writes.*] I wish to be attached to the legation at Rome.

Lelia [*aside*]. He never dreams that his wish is already realized.

Hugh. I have no right...but fairies are not like ambassadors—they have no responsibilities. Now for my third wish! That bothers me! What can I ask? [*Reflects.*] _____

SCENE VII.

HUGH—LELIA.

Lelia [*showing herself*]. Well, beautiful Prince Charming, what are you thinking of?

Hugh. Being a fairy, you ought to know.

Lelia. I *do* know!

Hugh. What nonsense!

Lelia. You still doubt my power? Take care, or I will punish you.

Hugh. By disappearing?

Lelia. No! by telling you all that you have been doing while I was away.

Hugh. That's impossible!

Lelia. Listen to me! After I had gone, you wondered who I was.

Hugh. There's nothing very strange in that.

Lelia. Then, not being able to solve the question, you felt tempted to inquire of my confidante.

Hugh. Your confidante?

Lelia. Yes, my duenna, whom I had changed into an opera-cloak.

Hugh. What ! you ?

Lelia. You see that she still kept her old age, but the transformation had taken the power of speech from her, and as she could not answer you, you were determined to find out whether my pocket-handkerchief was more talkative.

Hugh. How could you know ?

Lelia. Pocket-handkerchiefs are imprudent. They are pocket-alphabets ; so with one stroke of my wand, I made my initials disappear, but the handkerchief, a wicked magician whom I had condemned to keep that form, slipped a note into my pocket out of revenge.

Hugh. I swear to you that I did not read it.

Lelia. You needn't swear, for I know all about it. Your forbearance deserves a reward—so I will let you read it.

Hugh. Oh ! no, no !

Lelia. Not when I give you permission ?

Hugh. But——

Lelia. What's the use of trying to deceive me ? You are crazy to know the contents of that note ; so read it, I command you—come, obey me.

Hugh. Since you exact it... [*Takes note, hesitates to open it.*]

Lelia. You hesitate ; what are you afraid of ?

Hugh. I'm afraid that this paper is a Pandora's box, and that all sorts of troubles will come out of it.

Lelia. Read it, I tell you.

Hugh. " My dear "... Ah !

Lelia. Go on, go on.

Hugh [*reading*]. "Our protégé has been made attaché to the legation at Rome, and the news will appear in the official gazette to-morrow." Ah ! I was afraid of some great misfortune ! So this place of attaché has been given——

Lelia. To you.

Hugh. What, Madame, to me ?

Lelia. Was not that one of your wishes ?

Hugh. Yes, the second ; but . . .

Lelia [*giving him gloves*]. Here is your first.

Hugh. My gloves ! How could you have guessed ?

Lelia. The most trifling things are always anxiously desired.

Hugh. Important things are kept till the last. Well, and my third wish ?

Lelia. I own that that embarrasses me a little.

Hugh. No wonder, for I had not decided on one ; but now I shall no longer hesitate . . . [*Writes.*]

Lelia [*aside*]. His eyes betray what he is writing.

Hugh [*handing her tablet*]. Here it is.

Lelia [*without reading*]. Remember that this is the last one.

Hugh. But the one that secures my happiness.

Lelia. Happiness ; don't you know how it has been defined ? "Happiness is like a ball that, while it rolls, the child most eagerly pursues ; but once within his longing grasp, he flings again far from him."

Hugh. Yes, the child ; but the man holds it fast.

Lelia. Yes, when he is tired of running.

Hugh. No ; because he is wiser. Will you grant this wish as well as the others ?

Lelia. The power of fairies has its limits.

Hugh. And what are those ?

Lelia. The limits of the impossible ; and what you wish is precisely the impossible.

Hugh. Then you know my wish ?

Lelia. You ask for my hand in marriage .

Hugh. And your heart.

Lelia. Are you sure that fairies have hearts ?

Hugh. Yes, for they are good.

Lelia. There are bad fairies, you know.

Hugh. Then those have bad hearts ; but every fairy has a hand . . .

Lelia. Yes ; but they can't give it to a simple mortal.

Hugh. Make me immortal then.

Lelia. Nothing easier.

Hugh. What ?

Lelia. All you have to do is to publish a book on any subject, so learned that no one can read it. Write as preface praises of the oldest or youngest son of some one—to whom you must send your book and your card, and you will shortly be——

Hugh. Member of the Royal Society.

Lelia. And immortal.

Hugh. Having always held suicide in great horror, I prefer to live ; to live, that I may love you, adore you—for I love you ! Yes, I love you with all the strength of my soul. I have only known you an hour, but that has been long enough to fill my heart

with love, and now my entire happiness is in you, and you alone.

Lelia. Ah ! beautiful Prince Charming, you are very susceptible ! Straw-fires do not last.

Hugh. I swear to you that my love will endure with my life, and you who have the power to read our hearts should believe in our sincerity.

Lelia. The heart is such a badly written book.

Hugh. But you have such good eyes !

Lelia. A fairy cannot wed a mortal, I tell you, and as you refuse immortality——

Hugh. Will you consent to give up yours ?

Lelia. I will ! on one condition.

Hugh. What ?

Lelia. You know that the power of fairies rests in their wands. [*Showing fan.*] This is mine. If you take it from me, I shall only be a woman.

Hugh. Then, give it to me.

Lelia. No, because that would be a voluntary abdication, and consequently a thing to regret ; whereas what one is forced to renounce——

Hugh. Is just as much regretted.

Lelia. But is submitted to with resignation. You must find some way of getting my sceptre from me.

Hugh. Well, I can't use violence.

Lelia. No ! Violence is the right of strength—a primitive right. Now-a-days no right is acknowledged but the——

Hugh. Legitimate.

Lelia. No ! but that of cleverness. You have been attaché for an hour, so prove your diplomatic

powers and do something that will oblige me to offer you my fan of my own accord.

Hugh. In spite of yourself ?

Lelia. In spite of myself, or nearly so... Every stratagem will be allowed you.

Hugh. But you can guess all my thoughts.

Lelia. I cannot guess stratagems.

Hugh. Do you swear it ?

Lelia. Yes, but I shall fight against them.

Hugh. Then I will own myself conquered in advance.

Lelia. Is that your diplomacy ?

Hugh. No. It is frankness.

Lelia. Well, never mind ; try, and perhaps you will think of one.

Hugh. And if I succeed ?

Lelia. The charm will be broken and you will command.

Hugh [*aside*]. What shall I do ? What means shall I employ ? [*Aloud.*] Do you know any children's games ?

Lelia. Indeed I do !

Hugh. Well, there's a very simple one, called *The Pigeon Flies*... will you play it ?

Lelia. Willingly ! [*Aside.*] Poor fellow ! I wonder what he is trying to do ! [*They sit face to face.*]

Hugh. I'll begin—Pigeon Flies... [*Lelia raises her hand.*] Cashier flies... [*She hesitates to raise her hand.*] What ! you hesitate ?

Lelia. No, no ! [*Raises hand.*]

Hugh. Fairy flies. [*Lelia does not raise hand.*] A forfeit !

Lelia. What ! a forfeit ?

Hugh. Certainly ! and my gloves ?

Lelia. Oh ! that's right ! but I have nothing I can give you as a forfeit.

Hugh. Yes, you have !

Lelia. No, I haven't.

Hugh. Where's your fan ?

Lelia. Oh ! no, take my opera-cloak.

Hugh. Well then, we'll begin again.

Lelia. Now it's my turn. Pigeon flies... [*Hugh raises hand.*] Heart flies. [*He does not raise hand.*] Are you quite sure that hearts do not fly ?

Hugh. Mine doesn't, at least, for you've cut its wings.

Lelia. But wings grow again.

Hugh. Then they can be cut again.

Lelia. That's true !—*Lover flies.* [*He does not raise hand.*] A forfeit, sir !

Hugh. What, Madame ?

Lelia. There's my handkerchief.

Hugh. But I have nothing for a forfeit.

Lelia. You have my handkerchief and your gloves.

Hugh. Here are my gloves.

Lelia. No ; keep them. Each forfeit must be redeemed.

Hugh. You must redeem one first.

Lelia. No, sir, you first, as being the most guilty. To redeem your forfeit, I order you to go to the ball.

Hugh. With you ?

Lelia. No—all alone, and you must go three times around the room, without saying a word to any one—above all, to Lady Emily—then you must come back here.

Hugh. Ah ! to leave you is too heavy a penalty.

Lelia. For you perhaps—but for me——

Hugh. It is pleasing, eh ?

Lelia. I did not say so. Come, sir, obey !

Hugh. What must I do after my three perambulations in the ball-room ?

Lelia. You must come and make me redeem my forfeit.

Hugh. But will you really pay the penalty ?

Lelia. Why, certainly !

Hugh. Then, good-by, for a few moments. [*Aside.*]
Now I shall get her fan. [*Exit.*]

SCENE VIII.

LELIA.

Lelia. Prince Charming is certainly delightful. Lady Emily was right—he is the hero of my imagination—but just now, when I told this little occurrence to Emily, she got very pale. My praise of the baronet seemed disagreeable to her. Poor Emily ! can I have arrived too late ? In her place I should have kept a treasure like him to myself. Ah ! Emily dear, you look back with regret. Well, so much the worse for you, my love ! I shall marry the baronet,

and take him to Rome far away from you. I feel sure that he loves me, and I...I...must give him my fan, because he never will be able to get it otherwise...and yet I cannot offer it to him. One don't mind being defeated, if the conqueror thinks he has struggled for the victory. Well, I know a way, I think, of giving him this illusion, and that is, by going away. Yes, I'll go home, and when he finds out that I have gone, he will ask Lady Emily, and tell her how he loves me. Emily will be furious, and quarrel with him for wounding her vanity—the most lasting sort of a quarrel. Beppo must have come back by this time. [*Goes to door and calls Beppo. Hugh enters, dressed in servant's hat and coat.*]

SCENE IX.

LELIA—HUGH.

Lelia. Oh! here he is. Beppo, give me my opera-cloak. It's cold out, isn't it? Well, never mind, we shall soon be under our own beautiful Italian sky. [*Hugh takes opera-cloak, and as he puts it over her shoulders, she gives him her fan to hold that she may get her arms through the sleeves.*] Here, take my fan.

Hugh [*taking off hat and coat*]. Thank you, Madame!

Lelia [*recognizing him*]. Oh! Mr. Diplomat, you have played your game well.

Hugh. Now, Mrs. Fairy, that I have got your

power from you, I order the fulfillment of my third wish.

Lelia. I am obliged to obey—so here is my hand, Sir Roger.

Hugh. Sir Roger !

Lelia. Are you not Sir Roger Buford ?

Hugh. Why, no ! I'm his friend, Sir Hugh Stanley.

Lelia [*laughs*]. Sir Hugh Stanley !

Hugh. Why do you laugh ?

Lelia. Because last year I refused to marry you without knowing you.

Hugh. Why, then you are ?——

Lelia. Countess Lelia.

Hugh [*laughs*]. The Countess Lelia ?

Lelia. What are you laughing at ?

Hugh. Because during the negotiations, Roger fell in love with Lady Emily, and begged me to tell her that——

Lelia. Ah ! your mission !

Hugh [*taking note from pocket*]. Oh ! then, this nomination as attaché was for him ?

Lelia [*tearing note*]. Is it necessary to be an attaché to get to Rome ?

Hugh. What, do you consent ?

Lelia. As I have no wand, I'm obliged to obey.

Hugh. Ah ! Madame, I will give it back to you—and your forfeit also—since you are going to redeem it.

Lelia. Will it please you ?

Hugh. Can you doubt it ?

Lelia. Oh ! dear !

Hugh. What's the matter?

Lelia. To-day is Friday the 13th.

Hugh. No, it's Saturday the 14th.

Lelia [*joyfully*]. Oh! that's true! And Zerkina was right; she did not put the left slipper on the right foot.

THE SERENADE.

BY COUNT SOLLOHUE.

CHARACTERS.

MERCÉDÈS, *a young Widow.*

JUANITA, *her Sister.*

The scene represents a Moorish chamber, with window at the back. At the window, a large easy-chair ; at the sides, two tables and two chairs.

SCENE I.

JUANITA.

Juanita [*entering from the right. She opens the window, then approaches the foot-lights*]. It is very curious ! To be sure it is the custom here in Grenada, and very natural, that a young man should give a serenade, but *this* young man has been here serenading every evening. I feel so nervous and uneasy ! What does it mean ? Who is he ? Now he is going to begin. I'll take my seat by the window, so that I may hear better, and try to see him. [*Sits in chair by window.*]

SCENE II.

JUANITA—MERCÉDÈS.

Mercédès [*coming in, left*]. It is very curious. A young man has been singing every evening under this window. There is nothing unusual in a serenade, but every evening !... every evening !... It's a declaration... a proposal of marriage, perhaps... I am troubled. I'll take a seat by the window... Ah ! there's that artful little Juanita already in the chair ! Juanita ! what are you doing there ?

Juanita. Nothing... I am only trying to get a little fresh air... and then I am waiting for a messenger boy ; you know when he goes by, you say, pst ! pst ! and then he comes to you, you give him a note, and he takes it ; it is so convenient ! I want to send a note to my confessor, Father Grace.

Mercédès [*aside*]. She is deceiving me. I'll be even with her. [*Aloud.*] What do you mean by opening the window, and filling the room with mosquitoes ? Oh ! good gracious ! I've got one already down my back. Look quick, Juanita ! There, there ! [*Juanita rises.*] It sets me crazy. There, on the shoulder. Higher, lower—Oh ! I feel ill !... [*She throws herself into Juanita's seat.*] Thanks... I feel better !...

Juanita [*aside*]. And I never saw what she was after. Wait a moment. [*Aloud.*] What's that burning ? did you leave your candle near the muslin curtains ?... I smell smoke !...

Mercédès. A fire ! I am more afraid of that than

anything else in the world. [*She rises quickly. Juanita takes her place.*] Oh ! that is it !

Juanita. Yes ! that's it ! now we are quits.

Mercédès. Listen, Juanita . . . let us be serious. I am going to confess the whole truth. My happiness in life is at stake.

Juanita. As serious as that, is it ? So much the better. Only, I'm not going to budge from this chair.

Mercédès. It is a long story, a romance, a story of love.

Juanita. Of love ? . . . Go on, I'm listening.

Mercédès. I think I shall marry again.

Juanita. What ? You are not content with being a widow ?

Mercédès. My feelings carry me away, so that I'm always doing foolish things. A young man, whom I do not know, has been following me for the last week.

Juanita. Why ! it's my own story that you are telling me. It is I that the unknown young man has been following for the last week.

Mercédès. Every evening he sings a love song under my window.

Juanita. Under *my* window.

Mercédès. I am the mistress of the house. It is under *my* window.

Juanita. I am a young, unmarried lady. I am not a widow—so it is under *my* window.

Mercédès. Very well ! . . . We'll say *our* window. It doesn't make the slightest difference—the serenade is for me.

Juanita. No. It is for me.

Mercédès. What an obstinate little thing you are !

Juanita. What an obstinate old thing you are !...
Hush... [*Prelude in the orchestra.*]

Mercédès. Put out the light—so that they cannot see us from outside. [*Juanita puts out light.*]

Juanita. And we can both sit in this chair.

Mercédès. Yes ! yes !... but keep still.

[*Serenade in male voice heard outside. Any suitable song will do.*]

Mercédès. Well !...

Juanita. Well !...

Mercédès. There is no doubt about that ?

Juanita. Not the slightest. Do you think I had better write to my uncle ?

Mercédès. I have no one to consult but myself. Juanita, you are perfectly ridiculous.

Juanita. Your vanity has blinded you.

Mercédès. Well ! if you must know, I have met this young man. I have seen him.

Juanita. Did he speak to you ?

Mercédès. No...but he bowed to me. Yesterday, I happened to be strolling about the garden. He was at the gate...and bowed to me. You don't understand these things yet... But when a young man bows to you, you can soon see if he is in love with you. An indifferent man bows coldly, touches his hat, and passes on. But a man who loves you ! that's quite another thing. His hand trembles. He lets his hat fall. He has a troubled, beseeching

look, as if he had just been guilty of a crime, and was asking for pardon. When a man bows in that way, my child ! you will find it very difficult to keep perfectly cool.

Juanita. And is that all ?

Mercédès. Isn't that enough ?

Juanita. Then I'm ahead of you. He not only bowed to me, but spoke to me.

Mercédès. He spoke to you ?

Juanita. Yes . . . Isn't he handsome ?

Mercédès. Not so very . . . And what did he say to you ?

Juanita. He is superb ! Well, I was strolling about the garden, too, when I met him ; he took off his hat, and said to me, in that beautiful voice of his : " Will you be kind enough, young lady, to show me where the fire-wood is kept ? It is very cold this year."

Mercédès. And what did you reply ?

Juanita. I didn't say anything. I was so frightened that I ran away. I was afraid he had lost his head.

Mercédès. That was because he was thinking of me.

Juanita. What ! again ?

Mercédès. Certainly.

Juanita. Oh ! this is too much.

Mercédès. This is intolerable ! A little girl who can scarcely spell, imagining a man in love with her !

Juanita. A despairing widow, who wishes to drive remembrance from her heart, and replace it with hope !

Mercédès. Miss !

Juanita. Well ! Madame ?

Mercédès. I shall write to your uncle to take you home.

Juanita. I intend to go home—and with my husband, too.

Mercédès. Not with that one.

Juanita. Excuse me ; but just with that one.

Mercédès. Never.

Juanita. Immediately.

Mercédès. No...No...No...

Juanita. Yes...Yes...Yes...

Both together. It is impossible to live with such a woman. We must separate—to-day—immediately. She is wicked, envious, and jealous. I will kill her rather than she should belong to him. I am furious ! you will see ! [*Prelude of the orchestra.*] Ah ! there, he is going to begin again.

[*Man's voice singing. The words of the song reproach some one for not answering. The sisters run to the table, take flowers, and throw to him. Man's voice continues.*]

Mercédès. He is not satisfied, he continues.

Juanita. It is very strange.

Voice [*again*]. "I am going to fly——"

Woman's Voice [*outside*]. Wait !

Mercédès. Ah ! there's a third.

Juanita. Not for her—nor for me.

[*Woman's voice. She sings—then both sing.*]

The Woman's Voice [*loudly*]. This is the fifth night you've practiced that serenade, José, and you haven't got it yet—and call yourself the best tenor in the troupe !

The Man's Voice. That comes of trying it in this wretched little hole of a room, where you have to sit at the window to keep your voice from taking the roof off !

The Woman's Voice. What did you hire it for, then ? I told you when we came here a week ago——

The Man's Voice. I hired it, because it was the only place where they would take in two professional singers ; and even here the landlord told me we must keep it quiet, or all the people in the upper flats would give him notice. How they must enjoy the serenade by this time ! But, here goes again, for to-night's the last rehearsal. [*Begins the song again, and is heard retiring from the window as he sings, until it dies away.—The two sisters, who have remained immovable, in an attitude of grief, during the duet, come down the stage laughing at each other.*]

Mercédès. My poor child, I pity you with all my heart. Be reasonable ; I have done all I could to cure you of your folly.

Juanita. It is you, my poor, dear sister, who have need of pity. It is nothing to me.

Mercédès. Good heavens ! it's the serenade of the comic opera, to be given at the theatre next week——

Juanita. I know what I shall do. [*She lights candle.*] I will write to my uncle that I consent to marry Don Gusman Fernandes Alfonso di Fuentis di Calatrava

di Biscaya Montefiore Sarragossa San Christovalto, my cousin.

Mercédès. And I shall write to a friend of my late husband, the Count José of Brazil, that I consent to become his wife. [*She writes—tuning in the orchestra.*] Why, they are going to begin again !

Juanita. That doesn't make the slightest difference to me, as I am going to marry Don Gusman Fernandes Alf—

Mercédès. That's enough—I know the rest. How true it is that you should never reckon without your host !

[*The singers take up the refrain of the duet again ; the sisters continue writing at their separate tables.*]

THE FLOWER OF TLEMCCEN.

BY E. LEGOUVÉ AND P. MERIMÉE.

CHARACTERS.

LADY MONTGOMERY.

JULIA, *her Daughter.*

MADEMOISELLE JACQUES.

COLONEL SACKVILLE.

MR. SMITH.

A handsomely furnished parlor in a country house.

SCENE I.

LADY MONTGOMERY.

Lady Montgomery [*dressed as a middle-aged woman*]. Colonel Sackville returns to-day ! I shall see him once more ! Ten years ago, when, believing me cold and heartless, he in despair joined the French army in Africa as a volunteer, he little thought that I was almost broken-hearted. But I was not free ! My husband, Sir John Montgomery, was still living ... I even had the strength to hide my grief from Colonel Sackville when we parted ! But now ... now he will find me a widow, free ! [*Despairingly.*] It is ten years later ! Then we were of the same age. Now

...he is still young! Whilst I... Ah! the age of romance is past for me! especially now that I am about to marry my daughter to his nephew. Well, I'll try to forget my past dreams and think of myself as a grandmother! I will conceal any remains of youth under this cap!... I will devote myself to works of charity, and take up a course of serious reading! When a woman of forty years of age takes to good works... you may be sure that such devotion to duty is only the remains of a past love! [*Seeing Mr. Smith, Julia, and Mademoiselle, who enter.*] My daughter! Mr. Smith!

SCENE II.

LADY MONTGOMERY—JULIA—MADEMOISELLE
JACQUES—MR. SMITH.

Smith. Here are the latest rules of the institution, my lady.

Lady Montgomery. Very well; sit down, Mr. Smith; I am all attention. [*They all sit, Lady M. and Mr. S. on the left—the others on the right, with their work.*]

Smith. Rule 75: "Every boarder in this institute who shall be absent twice from morning or evening prayers, who is heard singing anything but sacred music, or who disobeys any rule of the institute; who writes letters, or receives any from..."

Lady Montgomery. Go on to the next, Mr. Smith.

Smith. H'm... h'm. "Or who introduces a novel into the house, shall be expelled immediately, and declared unworthy of being again admitted."

Lady Montgomery. Very good ! particularly the last clause. Julia, what do you say to that last rule ?

Julia. Why ! that I should certainly be sent away, mamma !

Lady Montgomery. For shame ! Julia.

Mademoiselle. How, mademoiselle ! what is that I hear ?

Smith. You ! Miss Julia !

Julia. I should like to know what harm there is in reading novels. I never could see any.

Lady Montgomery. My daughter, don't talk of things you know nothing about.

Julia. I won't ; but I do know something about novels. I've read plenty of them...and hope to read a great many more.

Mademoiselle. In France the jeune fille is not permitted to read the romance, but the English is different. Sir Scott...

Julia. English or French...I don't care...

Lady Montgomery. Julia ! Mr. Smith, you know her too well to believe a word she is saying.

Smith. I am sure that Miss Julia...

Julia. Mr. Smith ! if you say another word, instead of this Arabic gibberish that I am working here, I'll embroider in the best of English : " I have read all the French and English novels I could get hold of," and then I'll sign Julia Montgomery in full.

Lady Montgomery. Mr. Smith, will you hand me my scissors ? thank you. [*Aside to him.*] Don't push her too far.

Smith. A very appropriate record to introduce in

a piece of fancy-work. [*Beginning to read again.*] I pass over the next rules, about the dress ; you have regulated that very well. Gray gown, white veil, coarse cotton apron . . .

Julia. Coarse cotton ! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves ! I insist upon muslin aprons, with pockets and blue ribbons.

Lady Montgomery. No, coarse cotton is much the best. It is more suitable to the condition of these poor creatures.

Julia. They will look like Cinderellas. Why don't you give them glass slippers ?

Smith. "The constitution is read," for in fact, my lady, it is a real constitution, a charter that you have given to the institute. The pensioners will be introduced in their new costume and marched in single file before the manager and lady patronesses.

Julia. To what air ? I propose "God save the Queen." [*She sings the air.*]

Smith. That's a very good idea, Miss Julia : a little music would have a very good effect. [*To Lady M.*] Suppose they sung the beautiful hymn you composed, "Seated on a throne of clouds."

Julia. Mamma, you ought to wind up with a lively polka. Mr. Smith, I would like to see you dance a polka.

Lady Montgomery. Julia !

Mademoiselle. Oh ! Mees Julie !

Lady Montgomery. I am sorry to hear a daughter of mine talk in that way. [*To Julia.*] Do you wish people to think you crazy ?

Julia. They will let me do whatever I please, if they think me crazy ?

Mademoiselle. Oh ! Mees Julie !

Lady Montgomery. Julia ! I am ashamed of you !

Smith. No, Miss Julia, no one will ever say you are crazy ; whatever you do, you will always be lovely and witty !

Julia. Send for the clergyman and witnesses ! Mr. Smith has paid me a compliment !

Smith. There is nothing extraordinary in that.

Lady Montgomery. You have a great deal of patience, Mr. Smith. But, tell me, have you any news of the election yet ? My future son-in-law must be very anxious. Poor Louis ! he has set his heart on becoming a member of parliament.

Julia. Poor Louis ? You pity him because he is to marry me ! Well, perhaps you're right !

Lady Montgomery. Well, he will tell us all about it soon, for I expect him to-day with his uncle, who has just returned from Africa.

Smith. Oh, yes ! The one who is nicknamed Don Quixotte.

Julia. Why Don Quixotte ?

Lady Montgomery. Because on ten different occasions he showed the most chivalric courage. One day he saved his whole regiment, by defending alone the entrance to a ravine against the enemy.

Smith. Like Horatius Cocles !

Julia. Good gracious ! has he got but one eye ? . . .

Lady Montgomery. No ! he only received six wounds.

Julia. Six wounds! . . .

Lady Montgomery. Another day, during a retreat, a boy of twelve, belonging to the band, and son of the vivandière, fell, struck by a ball. The Colonel, hearing him call piteously for his mother, ran to him, and brought him out from under a shower of bullets.

Julia. And the child lived?

Lady Montgomery. Yes; but the Colonel came very near dying.

Julia [*quickly*]. He was badly wounded?

Smith. When the soldiers took his uniform off, they found on his breast a medallion with hair in it.

Lady Montgomery. His mother's hair, probably! . . .

Julia. I don't believe it was his mother's!

Lady Montgomery. Julia!

Mademoiselle. Oh! Mees Julie!

Julia. Here is Louis's coupé. Who is the gentleman with him?

Lady Montgomery [*with emotion*]. Probably his uncle!

Smith. Mr. Sackville has stopped to talk with the farmer.

Julia. A voter. . . We shan't see him for an hour.

Smith. Here is the Colonel!

Lady Montgomery [*troubled*]. Already? [*Aside.*] I haven't the courage to meet him yet! [*To Julia.*]

Julia! . . . Mademoiselle will receive the Colonel for me . . . I have some important letters to write for the mail which leaves in an hour. [*She goes out with Mr. S.*]

Mademoiselle. Asseyez vous, mademoiselle!

SCENE III.

JULIA—MADEMOISELLE—COLONEL SACKVILLE.

Colonel [*outside*]. In this room? Thank you, you needn't come any farther. [*Aside, entering.*] How my heart beats! [*Looking round the room.*] She is not here. [*Approaching Julia and Mademoiselle.*] Excuse me, ladies. I was told that Lady Montgomery was here...

Julia. She was here a few moments ago, but ran away when you were announced, Colonel

Colonel. Ran away!

Julia. Only to take off her cap in honor of your arrival...

Colonel. You think so?

Julia. I hope so!... For, just fancy! she has a mania for hiding away her beautiful hair under a frightful cap.

Colonel. What! she wears caps!

Julia. I depend upon you to make her change all that sort of thing, Colonel!

Colonel. I! But can I believe my eyes? that face...that voice...

Julia. Why, Colonel Sackville! don't you know me?

Colonel. Julia! Miss Julia! [*With emotion.*] Seeing and hearing you, has brought me back to ten years ago, to the moment...

Julia. When you carried me to the opera in your arms...

Mademoiselle. Oh! Mees Julie! for shame!

Julia. Don't be alarmed, my dear; I was only

eight years old. [*Introducing the Colonel to Mademoiselle*]. Mademoiselle Jacques... my governess... my guardian angel... a very busy angel, too.

Colonel [*looking at her affectionately*]. And this is the lovely girl who is going to be my niece!... I shall have the right to call you my child... and to embrace you... if my nephew will allow me.

Julia. Oh, your nephew! I think the best thing about your nephew... is his uncle.

Colonel. Now, don't spoil me!

Julia. But you spoiled me awfully when I was a little girl! You frightened everybody but me with your long mustaches...

Colonel. And you! you pulled them...

Julia. That's true! And you always came with your pockets full of sugarplums... and dolls... how pretty I was, and naughty... ask Mademoiselle if I have improved—she has been trying to reform me.

Mademoiselle. Oh, Mees Julie!

Julia. Do you remember? it was you who made them take me to the opera... before I was old enough for such dissipation.

Colonel. Yes, and you went to sleep before it was half over... I was obliged to carry you to the carriage.

Julia. You see how precocious I was! Well, I still go to sleep at the opera; but I have no patient carrier now.

Colonel. Where's my nephew?

Julia. Look at this embroidery, Colonel, and admire it. Haven't I a great deal of talent?

Colonel [*looking at the work*]. A verse of the Koran . . . why, who sent you this design ?

Julia. My mother had it sent from Algiers.

Colonel [*with emotion*]. Really !

Julia. Just imagine ! for the last two years . . . ever since the death of my poor father . . . everything here is Arabic.

Colonel [*much moved*]. Really !

Julia. Yes, Arabic designs, Arabic stuffs, Arabic views. I don't know whether all this is in honor of you . . . but we live like children of the desert. Isn't it so, Mademoiselle ?

Mademoiselle. Oh ! Mees Julie !

Julia. Don't say, Oh, Mees Julie, all the time ! [*To Colonel.*] Well, Colonel, as my mother will not make her appearance, let me take her place ; sit down here . . . [*Interrupting herself.*] Do you know there is one thing that strikes me as very curious ?

Colonel. What is that ?

Julia. You seemed to me a great deal older ten years ago than you do now.

Colonel. Really !

Mademoiselle. That is very simple, ma chère ! it is because you have ten years more——

Julia. Ha ! ha ! ha ! and he then . . . Mademoiselle . . . Hasn't he ten years more ?

Mademoiselle. That is true !

Julia. I should think so ! [*Seriously.*] It is very strange, but ten years ago I looked upon you as a sort of good angel.

Colonel. And now I am a good devil, eh ?

Julia. Yes; a good devil, whose actions are brave and chivalric! Colonel, have you ever been wounded?

Colonel. Yes, several times, as almost every one else has.

Julia. And, no doubt, under the most romantic circumstances.

Colonel. On the contrary, I am afraid they were very commonplace and prosaic—chance swordcuts and balls aimed at no one in particular... You feel a slight blow on the breast... a sensation of cold inside... that's all!

Julia. Ah! Colonel, how old must one be to join the band?

Colonel. You have passed the age... so I needn't answer your question. You say that everything about this house is Arabic?

Julia. Look for yourself! there is a picture of Algiers that mamma bought a few days ago.

Colonel. She bought a picture of Algiers! [*Looking at it with emotion.*] That little white house with a veranda... it was there I was taken from the hospital.

Julia. Yes! when you saved the little trumpeter...

Colonel. You have heard of that?

Julia. Yes...

Colonel. I'll show him to you when you come to Africa, for I intend to carry you off with your mother.

Julia. I would like nothing better. You must

make the Arabs bring us any quantity of ostrich feathers and dates, and perform all their feats of horsemanship we have heard so much about. We'll take Mr. Smith with us.

Colonel. Who is Mr. Smith?

Julia. Mamma's right hand in all her works of charity...he is very sanctimonious...I hate him. He is a hypocrite. We will take him with us to preach to the Arabs; your nephew will study up the colonization question; you and I will destroy an Arab village...and...we'll sell Mademoiselle to Abd-el-Kader.

Mademoiselle. Oh! Mees Julie, for shame!

Julia. Ha! ha! ha!

SCENE IV.

THE SAME—MR. SMITH.

Smith [*enters*]. Colonel!

Julia. The Mr. Smith I was telling you about—

Smith. Lady Montgomery has not quite finished her letters...She begs you will take a turn in the garden, and she will join you there as soon as she can.

Colonel. They must be very important letters... very well!

Julia. Now, Colonel! I'll carry you off...I'll take you out on the frog-pond that we call a lake. You will see how well I can manage a boat.

Mademoiselle. Mees Julie, madame your mother has forbidden you...

Julia. You know very well, Mademoiselle, that Mees Julie does whatever madame her mother forbids her to do. Come! who loves me follows me! [*She goes out with Colonel, singing.*]

Mademoiselle. Mees Julie! Mees Julie! Oh! my dear!...it is complete madness. [*Goes out; Lady Montgomery enters with Smith holding papers.*]

SCENE V.

LADY MONTGOMERY—MR. SMITH.

Lady Montgomery [*to Smith*]. Here is the copy almost corrected.

Smith. I hope you have changed nothing in the chapter on widows...

Lady Montgomery. No, not in that...but there is something here...Please leave me a moment, I want to finish this passage. [*Goes to table to write.*]

Smith. Don't make too many alterations. [*Goes out.*]

SCENE VI.

LADY MONTGOMERY, alone.

Lady Montgomery [*throwing papers angrily on table*]. And what do I care for books! It is useless my reading these pages over and over again. I can-

not see what is written...here... [*Putting her hand on her heart.*] I only see what is written there! I am so frightened! I dread this interview! I am afraid of his first look, which will tell me all...his love gone...my hopes ruined...he will see me changed...old...what a coward I am! I sent him word to wait for me in the garden. Why?...just that I might see him pass by my window: and I have seen him. Ten years have told on him, too! He doesn't carry himself as erect...his eyes have lost their brightness...but I should like to have seen a few more gray hairs on his head! To be sure I have none at all!... [*With determination.*] Why should I not take every advantage? my hair is as beautiful now as it was twenty years ago...Why should I not wear it in the most becoming way? Alas! he knows my age too well...well, the more reason why I should call art and dress to my aid. I will do it! and if I am defeated...well, so be it...but at least I will not give up my prospect of happiness without a struggle.

SCENE VII.

LADY MONTGOMERY—JULIA—MADEMOISELLE.

Mademoiselle comes in very much excited.

Mademoiselle. Oh! Mees Julie! oh! my dear! oh! my lady, how she will be angry when she knows it!...

Lady Montgomery [*advancing*]. What is the matter?

Mademoiselle [*to Julia, who enters*]. Oh! here you are! Heavens! if you had been drowned!...

Julia. Ha! ha! ha!

Lady Montgomery. Drowned! what has happened?

Julia. Nothing! nothing at all, dear mother!... I am all right. [*Laughing.*] But the Colonel was drenched!

Lady Montgomery. The Colonel!

Julia. He looked like Neptune with hanging mustache...

Lady Montgomery [*with impatience*]. But will you tell me?...

Julia. Oh! it is very simple! You know, dear mamma, you left the Colonel to my tender mercy... to amuse...and I took him out in the boat.

Lady Montgomery. You know I have forbidden you...

Mademoiselle. I did tell her so, my lady!

Julia. Oh, I'll bear witness to that! she did her duty! But in spite of her we went off in the boat...Oh! mamma! it was the most ridiculous sight! On the shore, Mademoiselle frightened to death... crying like a hen who has hatched a duck, and sees it take to the water for the first time. In the boat...Mr. Louis Sackville...my future husband...afraid that we would be upset...and get his yellow kid gloves wet...The Colonel frightened, too...

Lady Montgomery. He!

Julia. Yes! frightened! but on my account!...

calling out to me : Miss Julia ! . . . Miss Julia ! . . . don't stand up ! as if I was going to sacrifice my graceful pose ! Then his nephew . . . Miss Julia ! Miss Julia ! you will upset us ! What cowards men are ! . . . and I amused myself making the boat rock from one side to the other to frighten him still more !

Lady Montgomery. But !

Julia. Then, somehow or other, I rocked too hard, and the boat leaned to one side . . . and we should have gone entirely over but for the Colonel jumping into the water !

Lady Montgomery. Good heavens !

Julia. Then the boat came all right again, and he . . . he looked just like a sea-god . . . a Triton . . . Oh, it was delightful ! it was mythologic . . . he swam all the way to the shore, pushing us before him, where we landed safe and sound, thanks to our savior.

Lady Montgomery. But he ! he ! what became of him ? He will be ill !

Julia. He ! he don't mind it ! He could hardly be persuaded to go to Mr. Smith's room to dry his clothes, and I only hope they will not be dry enough to put on again to-day . . . We'll lend him the costume of Othello we had in the charades. What fun !

Lady Montgomery. Julia !

Julia. And, if anybody comes . . . we'll tell them that he is a Bedouin ! Oh ! I shall go mad if we don't dress him up as Othello !

Lady Montgomery I declare, Julia, you get more ridiculous every day ! Instead of sending him the

costume of Othello, I will take him some port wine ...or tea...

Julia. Don't be alarmed, mamma... Mr. Smith will take good care of him.

Lady Montgomery. Sometimes I think you have no feeling.

Julia [*becoming very serious*]. I! dearest mother? [*Impulsively.*] You know how much I love you!

Lady Montgomery [*tenderly*]. Thank you, my child. I am always afraid that those who do not know you well, will misunderstand you. [*Embracing her.*] There! I'll go and do what you ought to have done. [*Going away; aside.*] Now to prepare for the combat. [*Goes out.*]

SCENE VIII.

JULIA—MADEMOISELLE.

Mademoiselle takes her work and sits on the left.

Julia. Africa! the desert! [*Singing.*] "Mon bien aimé d'amour s'enivre." Is that it?...

Mademoiselle. Very good, Mees Julie. But why always the desert? Now, something of Bellini...

Julia. I love his voice. How well it would sound in the desert, under a tent, on a beautiful moonlight night.

Mademoiselle. Yes... but Bellini!

Julia. Mademoiselle?

Mademoiselle. What, Mees Julie?

Julia. Have you been in love with any one?

Mademoiselle. Oh! Mees Julie! for shame!...

Julia. Come now, tell me frankly ! I am sure those lovely blue eyes of yours have made themselves felt. Confess, you have been in love.

Mademoiselle. *Fi donc !* If my lady heard you !

Julia. I want to know how one can tell when they are in love.

Mademoiselle. The symptoms of love, your poet Shakespeare defines them thus : "his doublet all unbraced. . . no hat upon his head . . . his stockings fouled."

Julia. Oh ! are you not ashamed, Mademoiselle ? As for me, when I shut my eyes, I see large camels covered with gold, Arab horses pawing the ground, guns firing, piles of cashmere shawls as high as the house, beautiful rugs, and a hundred thousand swarthy beings crying out. . .

Mademoiselle. How can you see such strange things ?

Julia. "In the mind's eye, Horatio," as Hamlet says.

Mademoiselle. Oh ! Mees Julie ! would you really go to Algiers ?

Julia. Indeed I would ! Do you know how to tell fortunes ?

Mademoiselle. No !

Julia. I must see a clairvoyant, and find out if I shall really go.

Mademoiselle. You can go with Mr. Louis Sackville, to see his uncle.

Julia. I wouldn't travel ten miles with him, if I could help it.

Mademoiselle. Oh ! Mees Julie ! he is such an amiable young man !

Julia. To his constituents...but his wife would get very tired of him.

Mademoiselle. Oh, no ! Mees Julie ! I am sure you would not !

Julia. No, indeed, for I shall never be his wife. But, seriously, Mademoiselle, I am head over ears in love...Now, if you open your big eyes like that...and your mouth like a letter-box, I'll do something awful. I'll send a declaration of four pages to the object of my love. Do you dare me ?

Mademoiselle. Oh ! Mees Julie ! is it possible ? How ? You do not love Mr. Louis Sackville any more ? Who then ?

Julia. Who then ? who then ? Is it difficult to guess ? Are you going to pretend to be stupid, now ? Come now, dare to say that the uncle is not a thousand times better than the nephew. Say he is not, and see if I don't tear your eyes out...Just dare to say anything bad of the uncle. [*She pinches her, and pulls her hair.*]

Mademosielle. Oh ! Mees Julie ! you hurt me with your *ongles*.

Julia. Very good ! very good ! Mademoiselle has made a pun !...It's too much for a French woman of so tender an age...But, first I want to know what you can find to say against my choice...

Mademoiselle. First, you are engaged.

Julia. Secondly, I break it off.

Mademoiselle. And then, he has forty-five years, at least.

Julia. He doesn't look more than forty-four and a half. I like them like that. He has a beautiful mustache, which I will make him put in curl-papers, and his hair is very black still. . . fast color.

Mademoiselle. But soon it will become gray.

Julia. Soon! Soon never comes. I don't know how long it will be before he turns gray—perhaps next year, perhaps this; what do I care? He will go to Algiers. He will be made general. . . Grand triumphal entry. . . I shall be presented with embroidered scarfs, Arab horses, bracelets; and you. . . I will marry you to a sheik.

Mademoiselle. A sheik!

Julia. Yes, a sheik, and if you say a word, to a dervish! [*Giving her a shawl.*] There, make a turban of that, and put it on my head. [*While Mademoiselle puts turban on.*] Then he will be obliged to join his brigade. . . What a heart-rending parting! I shall await the bulletins with anxious impatience, as Mr. Smith would say. You will read the *Times*. I will recline on a divan, in a little *salon* lined with flowered satin, with verses of the Koran round the border. I won't receive any bores. My mother will have to leave Mr. Smith at the door, with her umbrella. . . You must arrange my turban better than that—put it more on one side—coquettishly.

Mademoiselle. And when a bulletin comes, and you read: "The general has been killed!"

Julia. Bah! No such bulletin would come! This turban is really very becoming. Does one ever become a widow at twenty? But look at me and tell me

if I was not born to be the wife of a pasha or an Algerian general ! I think I shall always wear turbans.

Mademoiselle. Oh ! Mees Julie ! Do take that off, it is the hour when Mr. Louis Sackville comes.

Julia. And if the uncle should come on his grand war-horse ! I would jump on behind, and gallop off with him—to the desert ! to the desert ! I hear some one coming.

Mademoiselle. Oh ! Mees Julie ! It is himself ! For heaven's sake, take off that turban ! Mon Dieu, what will he think ! [*The Colonel enters.*]

SCENE IX.

THE SAME—COLONEL SACKVILLE.

Julia. [*going to him, and saluting him comically.*] Salamalic !

Colonel. Aleïkoun, Salam ! You are lovely in this costume. Your mother is not here ?

Julia. No.

Colonel. She is like Providence, inscrutable in her ways, and never seen. She sent enough to Mr. Smith's room to save ten drowned men, and when I look for her . . . But where is she ?

Julia. She is in her room with Mr. Smith, correcting proof-sheets. You must be resigned, you are under my charge.

Colonel. I am resigned to my fate, as I came especially to see you and talk to you. But what were you doing ? Acting charades with Mademoiselle ?

Julia. Ask her what we were doing—and saying.

Mademoiselle. For shame !

Colonel. I am afraid I disturbed you. But I must ask you to give me five minutes, for I have something very particular to say to you.

Julia. You look as if you had something weighing on your mind. Now, Mademoiselle, will you be kind enough to take your work over there... Take a seat, great mogul.

Colonel. Your joyous spirits make me regret my past youth. But tell me, did you see Louis yesterday ?

Julia. Yesterday ?

Colonel. What ! you don't remember ?

Julia. Oh ! yes ! I recollect now... He was on his bay horse with crooked ears.

Colonel. What did you talk about ?

Julia. I forget... Oh ! about the coming election, I think.

Colonel. He is wrong ; he ought to keep all that sort of thing for his constituents ; but I was afraid you had quarreled.

Julia. I ! quarrel with him ! I never could with one... who... I could quarrel with you, perhaps.

Colonel. I hope never to give you cause. But listen, my dear child. You will allow me to call you child ? We men accuse women of being sensitive and exacting, whereas we are a thousand times more so. No greater misfortune can happen to a man than to find that the woman to whom he

has given his entire love is untrue to him. You treat my poor Louis badly.

Julia. How so !

Colonel. I can see myself . . . You have not—

Julia. What have I not ?

Colonel. It is not very easy to say . . . But you will excuse one who has lived so long amongst savages. You don't appear to love him as you should love the man to whom you are engaged.

Julia. Does he think that I am wanting in . . . affection ?

Colonel. He is in despair, and irritates himself, instead of trying to win your affection . . . now, dear Julia . . . tell me frankly . . . at my age you can say what you please to me . . . although old, I love youth . . . If you do not love Louis . . . it must be for one of two reasons—either you love no one yet . . . I have no doubt that is the case . . . you are so young . . . and your education—

Julia. Yes ! at school they forbid us falling in love, and biting our nails.

Colonel. You are not speaking frankly . . . Look at me ; I am something of a physiognomist . . . I see something serious behind that laugh which frightens me . . . after all, our feelings are not under our control . . . You think, perhaps, that you have found in some one else what is wanting in Louis . . . that life and enthusiasm which youth believes the proofs of a true love . . . [*She nods affirmatively.*] I was afraid of it ! Listen to me. You are very young, very lovely . . . without experience . . . good reasons for choosing

badly ; but you have a good mother who loves you, who lives only for you !

Julia. She is my best friend.

Colonel. You should consult her.

Julia. But she is busy with her proof.

Colonel. So you love some one... And it is not my poor Louis whom—But I won't say anything more to you about him ; I will think only of you now ... Are you sure that he whom you love is worthy of you ?

Julia. Very sure !

Colonel. One always believes what one most wishes. Look in that mirror... at that lovely face ... Ask yourself if so much beauty, if that noble little heart, ought to belong to a coxcomb ?

Julia No, never !

Colonel. You reassure me. I believe he is worthy of you... Does your mother know that you love him ?

Julia. No ! she is revising—

Colonel. Oh ! stop this joking... We are talking of the happiness or misery of your whole life... My dear child, I tremble when I think that a man can bewitch a poor young girl because he dances well.

Julia. Oh ! as for that, I am sure he dances horribly.

Colonel. So much the better, if you judge him from more serious qualities ; but why not speak to your mother ?

Julia. To tell you the truth, I don't know whether he ever thinks about me.

•

Colonel. If he thinks about you?...O! Julia! Julia! Here is a romance! You love an unknown man who has saved you from some danger by the light of the moon.

Julia. Perhaps!

Colonel. Nonsense, my child, utter nonsense! The dance was a great deal better...What! he does not know that you love him? He's a fool!

Julia. Yes...or he does not do himself justice.

Colonel. You are crazy, my poor child; but now you are sad, you change color; is that a tear I see in those lovely eyes? Ah! youth! youth! your rashness brings you many cares and regrets. Well, this handsome unknown?

Mademoiselle. Mees Julie, my lady must have finished; I will tell her the Colonel is here.

Julia. No, I will go and tell her myself...Tell me, Colonel: in Algiers...the women are veiled, so the men might as well be blind...What does a woman do, when she wants to let a man know she is in love with him?

Colonel. Why, as you may suppose, I have had no experience.

Julia. But others are more fortunate perhaps...or more conceited.

Colonel. You put me in mind of a very curious incident. As I entered Tlemcen I had at my side an adjutant, a brave soldier and very handsome. In the main street a woman, covered with a veil, caught the bridle of his horse, and threw a bouquet in the

folds of his burnous. . . [*Julia throws a flower at him and runs out hiding her face.*]

Colonel. Ah ! [*To Mademoiselle.*] Mademoiselle, will you tell Lady Montgomery that I am obliged to return to Africa immediately ?

[*He goes out back, turning to the right. Mr. Smith appears on left and follows him with his eyes as he disappears.*]

SCENE X.

MADemoisELLE—MR. SMITH.

Mademoiselle [*in front, looking very much excited*]. Oh ! ciel ! I have jamais . . .

Smith. What is the matter with the Colonel, that he rushes off in that way, without seeing anybody ?

Mademoiselle. Oh ! Meester Smeeth . . . Si vous . . . if you . . . Je ne sais pas . . . When I think . . . O ! mon Dieu ! a young girl !

Smith. Why ! good heavens ! what is the matter with you ? You speak English and French in the most promiscuous manner . . .

Mademoiselle. Oh ! silence . . . My lady !

SCENE XI.

THE SAME—LADY MONTGOMERY.

[*Lady Montgomery enters from the side opposite to where Julia went out. She is elegantly dressed, and her hair arranged with ribbons.*]

Lady Montgomery. My dear Mr. Smith, will you find the Colonel, and tell him I wish to speak with him, before he goes.

Smith. With pleasure, my lady. [*Goes out.*]

Lady Montgomery. Mademoiselle, will you send Julia to me?

Mademoiselle. Yes, my lady. [*She goes out.*]

SCENE XII.

LADY MONTGOMERY, alone.

Lady Montgomery [*picks up bouquet thrown by Julia ; after a moment of silence*]. Does she love him? or was it simply fun on the part of this giddy girl? All young girls are such children! And she is particularly so! Has her heart spoken? There are so many mysteries in a young girl's heart. To throw him a flower in response to his story...and he! he did not even pick it up...he fled...fled! Why? Does he fly from her...Or is it I that he is afraid of? A thousand feelings struggle within me! Jealousy...Yes, I am jealous of her! Joy! I am happy because he disdained this flower! A mother's grief! For, if my child suffers, there can be no possible happiness for me! Does he love me still? Does she love him? If so, I can't give her a stepfather with whom she is in love. Oh! I must get rid of this anxiety! Here she is!... I will question her.

SCENE XIII.

LADY MONTGOMERY—JULIA.

Julia [*coming in joyfully*]. You sent for me, mamma ! [*Seeing her dress.*] Oh ! how pretty you are !

Lady Montgomery. You think so ?

Julia. Now, this is the way I like to see you ! You look ten years younger !... Oh ! how beautiful your hair is !

Lady Montgomery. Really ?

Julia. If you go on this way... you will be more beautiful than any of us... I forbid you... [*Seeing her flower in her mother's hand, aside, troubled.*] My flower !

Lady Montgomery. What is the matter ? You seem troubled...

Julia. I ?

Lady Montgomery. Yes... one would think that the sight of this flower...

Julia. Of that flower !

Lady Montgomery. Yes ! isn't it lovely !

Julia. Certainly... very pretty !... Isn't the Colonel here ?

Lady Montgomery. When I came in ?... He—

Julia. Did he speak to you ?

Lady Montgomery. Speak... of what ?

Julia. Of anything... of his nephew... perhaps it was he who gave you that flower ?

Lady Montgomery. No ! I found it there... on the floor.

Julia. On the floor!... [*Aside.*] He would not even pick it up!

Lady Montgomery. What is the matter with you? This flower seems to interest you very much.

Julia [*bursting out laughing*]. Ha! ha! ha! They are all alike!...men are such coxcombs!

Lady Montgomery. What are you talking about?

Julia. I see, you know it all! The Colonel has told you everything; and, by your serious manner and severe expression, I know you believe that your daughter—[*laughing again*]...And he never understood...

Lady Montgomery. Understood what?

Julia. That I was joking...that I was acting an Algerian play.

Lady Montgomery. But—

Julia [*laughing louder*]. And he took my flower for a declaration?...ha! ha! I wish...ha! ha! ha! [*Suddenly stops laughing.*] Well, it's true...I never could tell a lie...I threw the flower at him, because I love him.

Lady Montgomery. You love him?

Julia. Yes!

Lady Montgomery. At his age!

Julia. Heroes have no age!

Lady Montgomery. A man you never knew before to-day!

Julia. There are men you can know in an hour, as there are others whom it takes years to know.

Lady Montgomery. This is folly!

Julia. It may be folly! I know I am wild and

capricious...but my heart is brave and true—I take that from you. [*Lady M. makes a sudden movement.*] This language from me astonishes you...I am astonished myself. The words I speak seem to come involuntarily from my heart...it is my heart itself that speaks. Yes, you will find in this wild, capricious girl a woman !

Lady Montgomery. A woman who pretends to love a man she does not know.

Julia. I have known him for the last three years—three years I have waited for him.

Lady Montgomery. You have waited for him !

Julia. Yes ! I have foreseen...divined...the disgust I have felt for every young man who has paid me any attention shows it...If you knew how I detest the sight of these fops, with little waxed mustaches, with hands in such pretty gloves, and little hearts...Your Mr. Smith is a hypocrite ! Mr. Louis Sackville is a coward ! You were not there just now in the boat ! If you had seen him...pale and trembling...clinging ridiculously to the sides of the boat, frightened by a girl, not being ashamed to show his cowardice before the woman that he loved ! But he ! he ! there is a heart ! I don't speak of his courage...it was a natural act on his part to throw himself into the water to save a woman!...but with what presence of mind he jumped from the boat to relieve it ! With what skill and grace he pushed it to the shore ! And just now, with what affection he spoke to me of his nephew ! How tender and lovingly he spoke—he, so accustomed to command

...I could almost see the tears in his eyes...I am sure he has loved! what I call loving! I am even sure he has suffered. Yes! I could see that he had a hidden sorrow, some sad remembrance which draws me still more to him [*tenderly*]. Oh! to console a great heart like his! And I think I could. I see clearly within me. I must be proud of the man whose name I bear! I must never be able to utter his name but with respect. In my husband's absence I must be able to think of the noble deeds he has performed! When I am out with him I must see all eyes follow me with envy. I am proud! I cannot marry any but a man superior to all others...by what right or title I do not know...but I cannot love any one below this standard.

Lady Montgomery. But if he does not love you?

Julia. That is impossible.

Lady Montgomery. And this flower?—which he did not even pick up.

Julia. This flower? My flower! Oh! I am miserable!...I had forgotten [*with determination*]. Well, I must know! This neglected flower may not mean anything...a coxcomb would have boasted of it, a fool would have laughed over it, an honest man might pretend not to understand it. I am younger than he, richer...this seeming contempt may be only delicacy...but contempt or reserve, I must know!...I want you to offer him my hand for me...and if he refuses it, I know what remains for me to do!...[*Lady M. rings.*] What are you doing?
[*Maid enters.*]

Lady Montgomery. Bring me my shawl and my cap. You will find them in that room.

Julia. Oh, mamma, are you going to put on that horrid cap?

Lady Montgomery. Yes! I feel chilled through. We try in vain to escape from age. [*Maid enters; Lady M. puts on cap and wraps shawl around her. Colonel enters.*]

SCENE XIV.

THE SAME—COLONEL SACKVILLE.

Julia [*to her mother*]. He!

Lady Montgomery. Thank you, Colonel, for returning. [*Colonel, seeing her, makes a gesture of surprise.*]

Lady Montgomery. Ah! I see you are not changed ... the same frankness.

Colonel. How, my lady?

Lady Montgomery. Yes! for in meeting me again ... you were not able to restrain a gesture ... a look ... of surprise ... at finding me so ... changed.

Colonel. I!

Lady Montgomery [*showing her daughter*]. But here I am ... at twenty years of age ... as you remember me. She is like me ... is she not?

Colonel. Very.

Lady Montgomery [*offering him the flower*]. Prove it to me ... by accepting this flower from my hand.

Colonel. Certainly, my lady.

Lady Montgomery. Thank you.

Julia [*throwing herself on her mother's hand*].
Mother !

Lady Montgomery. Poor child ! what joy ! [*Aside* !
Well, it is not as hard as I thought it would be.

THE OLD HOMESTEAD.

BY ANDRÉ THEURIEU.

CHARACTERS.

M. GILBERT, *age 60.*

ROGER, *age 30.*

ALINE DES AULNOIS, *cousin of M. Gilbert, age 18.*

SUSAN, *old Nurse of Aline's, age 50.*

Scene—A country house.

THE OLD HOMESTEAD.

A study on the ground-floor of a house belonging to Aline's mother. At the back of the stage a door leading towards the court-yard.. Front of stage, to the left, a table with books, and an arm-chair, a screen on one side of them, back of them a door leading to the rest of the house. Front of stage, to the right, a window looking on the garden, near the window a sofa and work-table, back of them a long window opening on the garden. Old furniture, old stuffs, old china, suggesting the last century.

SCENE I.

ALINE.

Aline [*sitting on the sofa, with embroidery; lets ine work fall, and sits pensive—sings.*]

Song—Robin Adair.

“What’s this dull town to me?”

etc. etc. etc.

Susan [*the door at the bottom of the stage opens, and enter Susan, laden with parcels*]. Here I am! How are you, my child?

Aline [*surprised*]. Why! is it you? We didn’t expect you till this afternoon.

Susan. That’s true; but I was so homesick up there; in the daytime I kept thinking about the old house, and the orchard, and the cows; and at night I dreamed of them; I saw the cat at the window, and the pigeons on the roof, and they looked so lonely—poor dear things—it made me downright melancholy. My sorrows! I couldn’t stand it; so I hopped off to the railroad—found a carryall at the station—and here I am. [*Puts down her parcels, and sits down.*] How nice it is to get back! Ah! my child, as the old song says, “There’s no place like home.”

Aline. How is mamma?

Susan. Very well. You should just see her running about Paris, from morning till night, bargaining with the shopkeepers, arguing with the lawyers, visit-

ing her friends. We have had a busy time, I can tell you ?

Aline. And Paris ? Is it *very* delightful, Susan ?

Susan. H'm ! Yes—and no. I expected something better. I thought the streets would be silver, the houses gold, the people splendid, and everything shiny and beautiful—but my gracious ! the mud was worse than ours, the houses black and dirty, the people haggard and pale, as if they were getting a fever ! and, worst of all, a *smoky sun* ! Ah ! give me our own bright sun at home !

Aline [*giving a weary sigh*]. It is easy to talk ! but the sun doesn't shine here ; the house is like a tomb—yes, *a tomb* ; and they may bury me in it, if I stay here much longer. I am dying of dullness.

Susan. Oh ! my darling ! how can you say such things ! At your age. Only eighteen !

Aline. What good do I get out of my youth ! What's this dull town to me ? The people walk the grass-grown streets as if they were asleep. Every morning I wake with a vague hope that something will happen ; something to break the solitude—the monotony—*something*—I don't know what ! I spring up, saying to myself, perhaps it will be to-day, to-day ! to-day !—but no—no—nothing happens—nothing comes.

Susan [*smiling with a knowing look*]. Something *will* happen.

Aline. I don't believe it. I'm weary of waiting. Ah ! Paris ! Paris ! how I wish I were there !

Susan. Patience, my child ; you will be there sooner

than you think for. Listen : your mother has a plan to sell this house, and live in Paris.

Aline [*joyous, but incredulous*]. What, really ?—*truly* ? Who told you ?

Susan. No one. But I've a quick pair of ears, and when I found they were hiding something from me, I just listened at the door, and heard all. Your mamma will be here to-morrow. She wants to talk it over with you and M. Gilbert.

Aline. Poor cousin Gilbert ! I wonder how he will like it.

Susan. Not at all, poor dear man ! He is not like you, he loves the old homestead. Remember, child, he has lived here fifty years. He came with your grandfather, when your mother was a little girl, and from that day to this he has not slept out of his own room. When your mamma married and left home, M. Gilbert staid on in the old house ; when she returned—a widow, with a dear little daughter, (that's you,) she found her old cousin waiting for her on the steps of the portico—faithful at his post like the family watch-dog ! Poor man, he hoped to die here. It will break his heart to leave the old home.

Aline. Nonsense. We will take him with us. We will make a bright, new home for him. Presently, when he comes in, *I* // talk him into it.

Susan. You will have hard work to do that. At his age, my child, old men are like cats—they love their garret, and they are not happy elsewhere. But try—try by all means—though I'm afraid you won't succeed. There he is now, coming in from his daily

walk in the orchard, with his hands behind his back, and his face glowing with peace and contentment. Ah! my poor, dear man! you don't know what's before you!... While you are talking with him, Aline, I will go and put things to rights upstairs. [*Picks up her parcels and exit, left.*]

SCENE II.

ALINE.

Aline [*joyfully*]. To get away from here! to live in Paris! the mere thought of it makes me as lively as a cricket, as light as a bird. [*Folds up her work, and sings some gay song—anything—four lines with a refrain.*]

[*M. Gilbert enters from the garden, and stands listening.*]

SCENE III.

ALINE—M. GILBERT.

M. Gilbert. Bravo, my darling! That's a pretty song! I like your gay voice better than the doleful looks I saw this morning. Isn't it a beautiful evening, and are we not happy to live here and enjoy it? I have been watching the old house, as I stood there, under the apple trees; the setting sun brought out the noble lines of the façade, and the pointed tower,

and my mind went back over the years—the many years—when I have watched it at the same hour : it seemed to me, that from every glowing window, my youth smiled upon me with all its hopes—its passions—its delights.

Aline [*aside*]. Poor cousin . How shall I tell him the news ? [*Aloud*.] You love the old house very much, cousin Gilbert ?

M. Gilbert. Do I love it ! For fifty years it has held my heart, my dreams, my aspirations. My life itself is here—and *you ask me if I love it ?* It seems as though I had created it in my own image ; as if it were a part of my being, and I a part of its very walls.

Aline. So that if you had to leave it——

M. Gilbert [*interrupting*]. To leave it !! How could you think it ! Could I leave so dear a spot, made doubly dear by the presence of an old friend like your mother, and a darling child like you ?

Aline [*persisting*]. But if mamma took a fancy to live in a city, and were to sell this house ?

M. Gilbert [*annoyed*]. Oh ! come, come, this is nonsense. My darling, don't play these cruel jokes, they make me shudder. See [*holding out his hand*], you have only said two or three idle words, and yet I tremble ! Think, therefore, how I should feel if this were true...eh ! What?...why do you look at me so?...so grieved?...so mysterious?... Oh ! it is all a joke—is it not ? [*Aline shakes her head*.] No ! The house *is* to be sold ? [*Aline nods*.] No ! no ! it is impossible ! How did you hear it ?

Aline. Susan came home just now. She heard it all. We are to live in Paris.

M. Gilbert [*horror-struck*]. And I?—

Aline. You, dear cousin? oh, that's all settled, you'll live with us. We will make you a charming little nest, very still and quiet, and furnished just to your fancy.

M. Gilbert [*bitterly*]. Nests are not built in old age. *This* was my nest, my shelter, my home! If I am torn from it I'll find a hole to hide in.

Aline [*caressingly*]. You feel so because you have never left this house, even for a day. But you'll change your mind. Oh! there is nothing so delightful as novelty.

M. Gilbert. Ah! you don't understand...

Aline [*interrupting him with a kiss, and putting her hand over his mouth*]. Hush! hush! Think of Paris and its marvels. Do you count them nothing? [*Coaxing.*] Come, it's all settled, dear old cousin, you *will* go with us?

M. Gilbert. No, no, a thousand times *no*!... Oh it can't be settled yet! I'll write to your mother. She will listen to reason—she will give up this foolish sale—this insane whim of a spoiled child—

Aline [*pouting*]. Ah, now you are cross. I am sorry I told you anything about it. Keep calm. I'll tell mamma myself that she must give up her charming prospects... I'll try to bear this dreadful prison-life... Ah, me! I'll try—that's all.

M. Gilbert. My dear child, listen to me.

Aline. No, no; what's the use? I can resign my-

self to die of dullness . . . Good by, cousin. [*Turns away her head and exit, left.*]

SCENE IV.

M. GILBERT, alone.

M. Gilbert. Aline ! . . . she won't hear me ! But my arguments—an old man's wishes—what power have they to influence her ? Oh, youth ! youth ! smiling, yet cruel !—which knows no anguish and can pity none—I am powerless against you. Her mother will yield to these girlish fancies—and *I!*—[*Sits down at left, and looks sadly about him.*] Old home ! I shall see you pass into the hands of strangers. Dear walls ! you shall hold me no longer. Friends, friends, we are to part !—but—I will not go far. I will keep you within the line of my horizon. I know an attic room near by from whence I could see you still. I will live there—and watch, day after day, for the smoke of the old chimneys in winter—and for the glowing windows I loved so well in the summer evenings. Yes ! yes !—but all my tender memories in every nook and corner within these walls—must I part from *them* ? And the sweet joy of living with two angels, who have given to the old house and the old belongings the charm of freshness and grace ! All—all is lost—lost forever. [*Puts his hands before his eyes.*] What ! a tear ! . . . When it is all over and I am alone—in my garret—what will remain to

me—but tears. [*Rises.*] Oh ! I am weak—this frightful news, flung into my peaceful life, has convulsed me. I must take courage. [*Walks about in agitation.*] Come, this is not courage ! I will be strong. I will be hopeful. What the devil!—things are not hopeless—they shan't be hopeless. After all, it is only the tattle of a servant. Susan is such a gossip. Who knows ! I dare say she meant to tease Aline, and the silly child believed her—it is so easy to believe what the heart wishes ! Bah ! the whole thing is an invention. How could I be so easily taken in ? [*A rap at the door.*] Hey ! some one knocked. [*Opens the door.*] Come in.

SCENE V.

M. GILBERT—ROGER, *in traveling dress.*

Roger [*rather cavalierly*]. Beg pardon. Is Madame des Aulnois at home ?

M. Gilbert [*surprised*]. She will not be at home for several days—but I am her cousin, and if I——

Roger [*interrupting*]. I believe this house is for sale ?

M. Gilbert [*aside—shocked*]. *It was true !*

Roger. I should like to go over it.

M. Gilbert [*aside*]. Already ! [*Aloud.*] Am I indiscreet in asking a few questions ?

Roger. Go on, sir.

M. Gilbert. First, who informed you so quickly of the intentions of the owner ?

Roger. The lawyer of Madame des Aulnois.

M. Gilbert [*much moved*]. He is right . . . And your name, sir?

Roger. Roger.

M. Gilbert [*repeating mechanically*]. Roger—Roger—ah, indeed! Thank you, and pray pardon me. You understand that in so serious a matter some precautions are necessary.

Roger [*smiling*]. I understand. You are afraid I am only here for curiosity. Don't be alarmed—My object is bona fide; and I am very prompt in business matters. As soon as the bargain is made, I intend to pay the purchase-money into the hands of the agent. Now that this is all made clear, I hope you will permit me to walk over the house, the offices, the garden, and the stables. The first look of the place is charming. I admire the general character of the house.

M. Gilbert [*flattered*]. Oh, do you really! [*Checks himself*]. You are easily pleased—for the street is dull, and the house inconvenient, and badly lighted, and very old-fashioned.

Roger. So much the better. I hate new houses, all built on one pattern; ten stone-fronts all of a row—and the partitions so thin you can hear your neighbors sneeze. Give me the good old-fashioned walls—strong, massive, fit to inclose a home, and lasting for a lifetime.

M. Gilbert [*eagerly*]. For centuries—[*Checks himself*]. But not always. The wall of our orchard is crumbling to pieces. As to the garden, it is in a

pitiable state—damp, sodden, the trees all covered with green moss, weeds in the borders, and the grass a field of snails.

Roger. Ah, charming ! I have always dreamed of those old-time gardens ; not cultivated, raked and spaded, and filled for three months by some florist at so much a bed ; but a true pleasure-ground, where, as the light fades, we may fancy the beings of a past age gliding through the shrubberies, and meeting under the ancient trees.

M. Gilbert [*with emotion, and coming close to Roger*]. Ah ! yes, yes... [*Aside.*] He is full of good sense and good feeling. [*Aloud.*] The garden may be well enough—for those who like it—but the house ! My dear sir, you will find it gloomy and cold—the stairs are of stone, and the windows have miserable little leaded panes, which keep out the light, and let in the wind and rain.

Roger [*good - humoredly*]. Pooh ! nonsense !—There's charm in the murmur of the breeze through the corridors when we are sitting in a warm chimney corner round the glowing logs.

M. Gilbert [*shaking his head*]. That is all very well when the chimneys are good—every one of ours smokes. [*Aside.*] Fine fellow ! his ideas delight—but terrify me. What chance have I against him !

Roger [*aside*]. Singular old man ! A queer way of attracting purchasers. [*Aloud and laughing.*] You are very frank, sir. No one can accuse you of over-valuing your property. So you hate this house ?

M. Gilbert [*shocked and enthusiastic.*] I ! I love it

with my whole heart ! [*Checks himself.*] That is to say... Ah ! I'm too old to play a part—I can't deceive. My young friend, I will tell you all. You have a good heart, and sound sense—you will understand me. Listen. This ancient house has nurtured me ; it has witnessed my childish joys, my youthful hopes, my earliest love—my first, my last, my only love ! I loved a young relation. I had known her from her infancy. I loved her in silence—I dared not speak. I saw her day by day, growing into all beauty within these walls, beneath those ancient trees. I was happy as the days went by. [*Pauses, sighing.*] But—ah ! timidity is criminal. When, at last, I dared to speak, her heart was gone—she was betrothed to another. I saw her leave these steps one morning with a husband... I remained behind ! Here, within these walls, she was still my own. I remained ; I have spent my life here—happy, yes *happy* with my thoughts, my memories of her. Finally—in brief—the owner of this house, Madame des Aulnois, came to occupy it with her little daughter—a sweet little child, whom we have brought up together amid the tender silences of the old home. But the child has become a girl—she stands on the verge of womanhood—and lo ! there is in her the dawn of the emotions which were once my all ! Such is life ! Ah ! my bird ! her wings are growing—the nest is too narrow for her—she longs to fly. It is to please her, that her mother talks of selling the house... Sell it ! Oh !—the thought is agony. [*He holds his hands toward Roger, who grasps them.*] You

understand me ! *you* feel for me ! you know and respect the memories of the past. You spoke just now with reverence for old and venerable things. *You* will pity my trouble—and help me to escape it ?

Roger. I desire nothing better—but how ? If I were to resign the purchase the house would still be for sale.

M. Gilbert [*sadly*]. Ah ! true—true.

Roger. It is not the purchasers you must manage ; it is Mademoiselle des Aulnois.

M. Gilbert. Aline ! Yes, you are right. But, how can I do it ? I have tried already, and—failed. [*Reflects.*] There *is* a way, however—perhaps you will laugh at it—plead my cause with her.

Roger. I, how could I ? What influence should I have ?

M. Gilbert. The influence of youth. I am old, and alas ! alas ! it is like that influences like. She thinks me an old fogy—she can see none of my thoughts or meanings—but you are young ; she may listen to you, she may be touched—if you are only eloquent—as you *can* be.

Roger. Ah ! but *can* I ? I have lived half my life at sea—I don't know how to talk to young ladies.

M. Gilbert. Well, first your wish to purchase the house will serve as an introduction. Then, gently and insinuatingly, you must say to her all that you said to me just now. And, oh ! you will say it even better than you did before—I *know that*. Do this for me, and receive the grateful blessing of an old

man. [*Takes him by both hands.*] I hear her coming. Here she is—I will present you.

SCENE VI.

THE SAME—ALINE.

[*She enters left, and stops surprised on seeing a stranger.*]

M. Gilbert. Dear Aline, your wishes are fulfilled. Here is a purchaser for the old home. [*Presents Roger.*] **M. Roger.** [*Aside to Aline.*] He wishes to look over the house. I've not the heart to go with him; will you go, and spare me the sad office? [*Aloud to Roger.*] I leave you with Mademoiselle des Aulnois. She will be a better guide than I could be. [*Aside to Roger.*] Now, be firm, be persuasive—or my old age must sink to grief and desolation. I'll wait for you in the orchard. [*Goes out by garden door. Aline follows him to the threshold.*]

SCENE VII.

ROGER—ALINE.

Roger [*glancing furtively at Aline while she follows M. Gilbert*]. She is lovely indeed! I am touched and moved before I even speak to her.

[*When M. Gilbert goes out, Aline returns slowly to the front, glancing quickly at the new-comer.*]

Aline [*aside*]. He is not handsome; but he looks sincere and frank.

[*She comes nearer to Roger—they look at each other as if each expected the other to speak first.*]

Aline [*smiling, to Roger*]. Would you rather see the house, or the garden, first?

Roger. I will glance at the garden—just for form's sake—for the truth is, I am—charmed—and my mind is made up.

Aline. Then it is you who wish to live here?

Roger. Yes, mademoiselle, I—myself—with my dog, and my books.

Aline [*with naïve pity*]. Ah! so young!

Roger [*with a comic air of resignation*]. Only thirty years old! It is too early to become an actual hermit. But I long for the country; the flimsy, restless life of a great city bores me. Sometimes, as I return to Paris in beautiful autumn weather, I look out from the windows of the railway carriage, and see some fine old house—like this—on the outskirts of a country town; and as it flits away and disappears behind its ancient poplar trees, I watch the blue smoke curling upward from its mossy roof, I catch the last glint of its vine-embowered windows, and I say to myself: Oh, if there is such a thing in life as pure romance, it is *there* that I must look for it.

Aline [*slowly*]. And you think you will find romance in coming to live here?

Roger. I am sure of it.

Aline [*laughing*]. Ah, my conscience won't al-

low me to let you think so. I know better. I live here, and I know too well there is no romance—only weary dullness.

Roger [*aside*]. What a sweet voice ! What a charming, ingenuous manner ! [*Aloud.*] That is because you have no patience, mademoiselle. The lark sings in the fields—not in the cities—I will prove it to you, if—I—may.

Aline [*apart*]. How original he is ! [*Aloud.*] Tell me. I am listening. [*She leans against the back of a chair and looks up at Roger.*]

Roger [*looking at her with frank admiration*]. Well, I will give you an example . . . You, yourself—if you will permit it. You are very lovely . . .

Aline [*confused*]. Ah ! no ! I—

Roger [*continuing*]. You were seventeen last April.

Aline [*astonished*]. That is true . . . How did you know it ?

Roger [*coming a little nearer*]. I read it in your violet eyes—the violets bloom in April . . . With your youth, and your beauty, it cannot be that you have never thought of marriage . . . of a marriage where . . . Love is king ?

Aline [*aside and agitated*]. Oh ! what is he going to say ! [*Aloud.*] It is getting late—ought we not to see the garden ?

Roger. Listen to me one moment longer. Has the first word of love alarmed you ? . . . yet the whole life of a young girl is but the dawn of love. Tell me, has the thought of a betrothal never stirred your heart with soft emotion ? . . . Have you never

dreamed of a moment—a moment fraught with all the mystery of life . . . the moment of your first meeting with the one you are to love . . . the one who . . . loves . . . you ? Well, in a great city the first sacrifice you will have to make is the sacrifice of such emotion.

Aline. Why ?

Roger. Because in the great world fashion and conventionality have robbed marriage of its mystery and its poetry. All is ticketed and taxed like a railway journey : the wedding gifts are ordered by the bushel : the wedding dress must be in the latest style. Everything is commonplace—from the gaping crowd in the church to the suite of rooms at a hotel where the honeymoon is passed. Husband and wife, as yet scarcely known to each other, are flung together amid the commonest and vulgarest scenes of every-day life . . . the sweet fragrance of early love . . . so pure . . . so fresh . . . so evanescent—can it live in such an atmosphere ? . . . But here . . . ah ! *here* ! . . .

Aline. [*regretfully*]. What you say is all so sad—so very sad. Still, you don't know how dull and monotonous a country life is . . . No, *indeed* you don't. We pine in solitude, and dry up at the roots, like plants in the depths of a forest.

Roger. Oh ! you are mistaken. While the wild flower is only in its bud, the breeze, the sky, the sun are its sole companions ; but when, on a bright summer's morning, the bud opens into a flower, see how the bees and the butterflies come murmuring around it ! Whence do they come ? Why do they come ?

This venerable homestead...how few people have known of it...the grass grows in its alleys, as you say. But lo! a young girl opens into womanhood, and those...who...would love her—come to her...the romance of which I told you has begun. Do you know the story of the Sleeping Beauty?

Aline [*smiling*]. I can guess what you mean! This old house is the palace of the princess...but—[*sighing*—alas! where is the prince! [*She moves away, and sits on the sofa.*]

Roger. Ah! who knows! Perhaps you will hear him at the door...when you least expect him. Some lovely evening...like *this*...an unknown young man may arrive...

Aline [*thoughtlessly*]. Just as you have done!

Roger [*continuing*]. And will sit beside you. [*Sits beside Aline.*] And will look out...with you...upon this sweet old garden, and naturally as the flowers bloom, he will speak to you of love...[*Takes her hand.*]

Aline [*making a movement to rise*]. Oh! but I shall not listen to him.

Roger [*holding her gently down*]. Why not? You are listening to *me*.

Aline. You! but that is very different—you have come to buy the house.

Roger [*aside*]. She is angelic! [*Aloud.*] I don't know why I came...There's a gulf between the moment when I entered the house, and *this* moment...and my heart has crossed it!...What I *am* now—what I *feel* now...why should I tell you if you have

not guessed it?... Dear, innocent girl... I love you... [*Tries to take her hand, but Aline escapes quickly and goes over to left.*]

Aline [*with a voice of emotion*]. What are you saying!... Leave me... leave me...

Roger [*in a supplicating tone*]. Mademoiselle Aline!

Aline. No! not a word! if *you* will not leave the room, I shall leave it. [*Makes a movement to go out left.*]

Roger. No, no! it is my place to go... since I have displeased you. Adieu, mademoiselle... I go... [*lingers a moment*], but—[*passionately*], I love you. [*Goes out by door at bottom of stage.*]

SCENE VIII.

ALINE, alone.

[*She walks about agitated; stops sometimes to listen, then goes and sits by the window.*]

Aline. I am choking! It was too much! Who could have believed it? He seemed so dignified—so reserved—so sensible—so true a gentleman. Was it a wager?... or a joke? No, he was serious—and his voice trembled, when he said, “I love you.” I—love—you... and his hand pressed mine! Oh! how shocking!... but... why am I not more angry? I am ashamed that I am not angry. I ought to have answered him severely—yes, severely. But... there was something... there was a charm in his words and

manner which fascinated me. What must he think of me!... And I!... oh! what am I thinking of now? ... Something... unknown... fills my heart! Oh! I am frightened—my hands are cold—my cheeks burn... [*Moves about to distract her thoughts.*] How lovely the evening is! How sweet the flowers smell! My heart is lifted up! I am filled with life—and hope!... Oh! oh! I cannot keep from crying! [*Hides her face in her hands and breaks down completely.*]

SCENE IX.

ALINE—ROGER.

[*The daylight is fading. Roger softly opens the door at back of stage, and takes one or two steps into the room.*]

Roger. I have lost myself in the old place. I can't find either the orchard or the old gentleman. I dare say he has come in again. [*Sees Aline*]. Ah! she is still here... in trouble... her pure heart shrinks from what I said just now... and she is grieving! Dear child! I was too rough with so sweet a flower! Dare I... *can* I console her?

[*He shuts the door with a slight noise, Aline lifts her head, sees him, and shrinks back.*]

Aline. What is this? why have you returned?

Roger. Fear nothing, mademoiselle, I am searching for M. Gilbert, who intrusted me with a commission. But since I am here... let me tell you how

I regret having displeased you... these ancient walls had a tender charm which... inveigled me...

Aline. Ah! your excuses increase my... my trouble. I ought not to have allowed you to go so far. I ought to have stopped you at once... but... I... dared not.

Roger [*gently*]. You were not afraid of me?

Aline. Afraid? oh no! But your look... so frank, so dignified... had made me trust you—I said to myself, nothing false or bad can come from him... and... I listened to you...

Roger. And you were right. If my admiration forced itself too warmly from my lips it was not because my respect—my reverence—was wanting. Believe this, and... forgive me. [*He appears about to leave her.*] And now I bid you farewell.

Aline. Farewell.

Roger [*not moving*]. Good night, mademoiselle. [*They remain a moment, face to face, motionless and silent.*]

Aline [*timidly*]. And the commission... which my cousin gave you?

Roger. I had forgotten it. But you can help me to repair my neglect. Your cousin, who adores the house, is wretched at the thought of leaving it. I saw this at once, and I have not only given up my intention of buying it, but I have promised him I would persuade you not to sell it.

Aline. Poor cousin! Well, he shall be happy... you will think me capricious... but I fancy... now... that I can reconcile myself to live in the old home.

Roger. Is this true? Then you will make the good old man happy indeed—it will bring a blessing on your own dear head.

SCENE X.

THE SAME—M. GILBERT.

[*The latter enters unperceived through the garden door.*]

M. Gilbert [*apart*]. I was in perfect misery; I could wait no longer: where can the young fellow be! [*Sees them.*] Why there he is—still with Aline!

Aline [*thoughtfully*]. I find in the old surroundings a charm that I did not know they had—the old house seems brighter—the garden sweeter.

M. Gilbert [*aside and wondering*]. What is she saying? If I could only listen without being seen! [*Slips behind the screen.*]

Roger [*smiling softly to Aline*]. And what good fairy has wrought the miracle?

M. Gilbert [*sitting down behind the screen, aside*]. There, I can listen at my ease. My heart beats as if I were a lad.

Roger [*to Aline*]. You do not answer me.

Aline [*after a moment's pause*]. Because I do not know how to explain what is passing through my mind. It is all so confused. I seem to have waked into another world. This morning I was weary and indifferent in the midst of the old, familiar, silent ob-

jects. To-night, they have a voice...they speak to me—I notice them—I listen to them...*Is it* a fairy tale? I see the shadows of the lindens...I smell the sweetness of the flowers...I hear the birds at their evening song...I feel it all...and I—I love—it!

M. Gilbert [*aside*]. How I long to kiss her.

Roger [*aside*]. Enchanting child! [*Aloud.*] And you are sure that before this evening these charms had never struck you?

Aline. Oh, yes! I am very, very sure. While you were speaking the thought dawned upon me, "*He is right.*" My eyes were opened... [*With less reserve.*] Perhaps I am wrong to say all this to you...but I can't deceive——

Roger [*ardently*]. Ah! say more! say more! Let your heart speak—do not bind yourself by the false ideas which forbid a young girl to speak or to feel honestly. [*He takes her hand and leads her to the window*]. See! the moon rises...the lilies shine in its silvery light...they unfold their white petals, and give forth their fragrance to the breeze...let your youth and loveliness blossom and unfold like theirs!

M. Gilbert [*wiping his eyes*]. Fine fellow! he brings the tears to my eyes.

Aline [*looking to the garden*]. The moonlight makes all things beautiful. It gives a mysterious charm even to the old orchard!

Roger. Yes! the charm that clings to all that is venerable. Beneath the ashes of the past live the undying hopes and joys of those who have gone before;—bequeathed, by the men and women who

once lived and loved, to all lovers who come after them. Springs may come and go—lilies may bloom and fade—but the one thing which lives for ever within the sanctity of these ancient walls is—Love !

Aline [*softly*]. Yes—and to-night I know it—I love it—all.

Roger [*clasping her hand*]. You love it—all—ah ! but *is that all* ? . . . [*Aline, troubled, looks down and is silent.*] Dearest . . . beloved ! . . . my heart, my life are yours—can you not love *me* ! Listen. I am alone in the world, I am able to live how and where I choose. Give me a word of hope ! Let me pass my life with yours, in the dear old home ! . . .

Aline. You ask me for a word of hope, but oh ! how can I . . . give it ! . . . I am alone . . . [*then almost with a cry*] Mother !

Roger. Do not weep ! She will be here to-night. I have much to tell you ; much to explain. Let me open my heart to you, and tell you my history. Come, let us talk together under the trees, and beside the flowers. [*Tries to draw her to the garden door.*] Come ! see how softly the moon lights up the paths.

Aline [*following, then pausing*]. Oh, I am afraid . . . is it not too late ?

Roger [*tenderly*]. I entreat you, come ! And besides, did you not promise to show me the garden ?

[*They disappear.*]

SCENE XI.

M. GILBERT, alone.

[*He comes out of his hiding-place beaming with joy.*]

M. Gilbert. The dear children ! I am beside myself with joy and tenderness. Heaven sent that young fellow here ! I have shed the sweetest tears of all my life ! And Aline ! What simple grace and truth ! As she spoke, my youth flowed back upon me, and I seemed to hear . . . her mother ! Ah ! he said truly that these walls were teeming with the tenderness and love of other days . . . I know it well . . . and the shadow . . . no, *the halo* of that love is in the air . . . it falls on *them* ! [*Walks quickly about.*] My heart is full of joy ! There is a youth . . . ah ! yes, a youth for old age !

SCENE XII.

M. GILBERT--SUSAN.

[*She enters left, not seeing M. Gilbert.*]

Susan. Where in the world are they ? Here's nine o'clock by the bells, and not a soul at home. [*Sees M. Gilbert.*] Well, well, here you are ! the supper is cold, and everything waiting. Where's mademoiselle ?

M. Gilbert [*coming close to Susan with a mysterious air*]. Hush ! She is in the garden.

Susan. In the garden ! at this time of night. She'll get her death of cold. [*Calling.*] Mademoiselle !

M. Gilbert [*still mysterious*]. Stop! Hush!—
[*Bursting out.*] Oh, Susan, I am so happy!

Susan. Happy? Are you? Well, I shouldn't have thought it after what Mam'selle Aline told you. You take the sale of the old home rather quietly!

M. Gilbert. The sale? Pooh! We've got far beyond that. A great deal has happened... A young man has come...

Susan. To stop the sale?

M. Gilbert. No, to buy the house.

Susan. I don't understand.

M. Gilbert. He came to look at it, but *I* was there—I and Aline. He has seen her—he admires her—he adores her.

Susan. What? the house?

M. Gilbert [*more and more exhilarated*]. No, no—Aline. He loves her. She loves him—they love each other! I brought it all about. No more selling the house; no more partings from the old home—no more tears. Peace, hope, joy, and—a wedding. See, they are in the garden.

Susan [*astounded*]. You didn't let them go alone?

M. Gilbert [*rather confused*]. The fact is they never asked my permission.

Susan. Gracious goodness! You are a pretty man to be left in charge. What will madame say?

M. Gilbert. Now, don't worry. He is a fine young fellow—the heart of a man, and the manners of a gentleman. It's an excellent match—and, between ourselves, I believe he is very rich.

Susan [*impatiently*]. What mischief you've done!

If he were as brave as a prince, and as rich as a nabob it won't do—he comes too late—Madame has got some one else in her eye for mademoiselle.

M. Gilbert. Some one else !

Susan. Yes ! and it's all arranged. Madame has passed her word. His name is Monsieur de Bréteuil. I saw him in Paris with my own two eyes—and a very good-looking young man he is. A pretty kettle of fish you've got yourself into ! Madame will be furious with you.

M. Gilbert [*dropping into a chair*]. Susan ! This is worse than all the rest. I am lost. I can never face Madame des Aulnois. I must go. My dear beloved home ! the struggle has come again ; I must leave you ; I must bid you farewell forever ; my last hope is gone . . . And those poor, dear, loving children ! oh, it is hard -- it is cruel . . . what can be done ?

Susan. Done, indeed ! a pretty question ! Why ! separate them. [*Goes toward the window.*]

M. Gilbert. Yes, you are right. But [*with dignity*] come back, Susan ; it is not for you to do it ; I will do it myself . . . [*Glances round the room.*] Ah, my fresh hopes . . . my second youth . . . what a bitter end ! [*Aline's voice is heard singing a few bars of Home, Sweet Home. M. Gilbert listens a moment, then sinks into a chair near the screen and covers his face with his hands—Susan stands near him to left.*]

SCENE XIII.

THE SAME—ALINE—ROGER.

[*Enter together.*]

Aline. We have talked of many things ; but you have not told me what I shall say to mamma...
[*Susan peeps round the side of the screen ; at the sound of her voice Aline and Roger start, and come forward.*]

Susan. Why ! Good gracious ! Monsieur ! [*shaking M. Gilbert*]*—It is he !*

M. Gilbert [*bewildered*]. He ! Who ?

Susan. Why, Monsieur de Bréteuil...the gentleman for Mademoiselle Aline.

Aline. What is she saying ?

M. Gilbert. What is all this ? Is he ?...Are you !...oh, young man ! what conflicting emotions you have caused me in a few short hours ! You told me your name was Roger ?

Roger. Roger de Bréteuil. [*To Aline.*] This is the explanation I was about to give you when Susan interrupted us. Madame des Aulnois, whom I have known in Paris, was good enough to think me worthy to become her son-in-law. I felt the honor...but I am somewhat...fanciful. I wished to see the young lady before it could be known that I pretended to her hand. I longed to woo her...to win her unbiassed consent...I spoke of my project to Madame des Aulnois, and she smiled upon it. I seized the occasion of the house being for sale—and I came...in time to console M. Gilbert, and to

plead the cause of the Old Homestead with Made-moiselle Aline. [*To Aline, tenderly.*] Have I succeeded ?

M. Gilbert [*kissing Aline on the forehead*]. Ah ! my darling ! Antiquity is a good thing. There's nothing like an old tree to build a nest in . . . ask the birds ; and there's nothing like an old house to make love in . . . ask Roger.

[*Curtain falls.*]

THE CARDINAL'S ILLNESS.

BY GUSTAVE DROZ.

CHARACTERS.

ABBÉ LE ROUX.

THE COUNT.

THE COUNTESS.

LEDOYEN, *a Notary.*

BOIS DE GROSLAU, *a Préfet.*

CLERK.

MAN SERVANT.

Library—Table covered with papers.

SCENE I.

COUNT and COUNTESS.

Count. It is enough to distract one—unforeseen difficulties and obstacles rising up suddenly at the last moment, when I haven't an instant to spare, over-run with work, and only kept up by quantities of black coffee. Really, Countess, this is paying dear for the honor of being deputy.

Countess. I know you have an iron constitution, but I really don't see that these obstacles are so enormous.

Count. What ! You don't see that by insisting on its being entirely secular, they make it impossible for me even to found it ? Now the foundation of that school is the base, the pivot of my election, I tell you frankly. Look at this confidential note from headquarters: "We must keep out the church party by all means, my dear Count ; beware of maneuvers, that may be reserved for the last moment ; make haste, etc...the abolishment of church influence, or I will answer for nothing, etc..." This is what that lovely Prefect has written me, impudent fellow ! proclaim it secular ! Very easy to say !

Countess. Then don't proclaim it anything, my dear Count.

Count. How can I help proclaiming when twenty or thirty letters threaten me, when they write horrible things on my door, when they literally put a pistol to my breast ? It's incredible... The behavior of these people is most discouraging...What, gentlemen, have I not the right to spend my money to please myself ? Who authorizes you to suspect my good faith ? Who authorizes you to call in question my devotion to my country ? Can't I follow the dictates of my own conscience—according to circumstances ?

Countess. To proclaim in advance that it shall be secular is to embroil yourself completely with the church party—in other words, with half the country.

Count. And to promise it as belonging to the church is to embroil me with the other half—but that's not all, my dear : consider that that worthy Abbé le Roux will never—no, never, sell me——

Countess [*quickly*]. Oh, we'll manage that. He has enormous influence over the Cardinal—he manages everything.

Count. I know that, and that is precisely what troubles me. Never, I repeat, will the Abbé le Roux sell me Les Herbiers, knowing that I intend to build a school, independent of the church, on that ground. Now there is no other site. Les Herbiers has, moreover, the advantage, as you know, of adjoining the park, so that in case of necessity they could be united.

Countess. That would certainly be very nice.

Count. Exactly! Oughtn't they to be satisfied with my promise?—and when I am elected——

Countess. Never mind that—we want the Abbé's property, and we will have it ; that's the only light in which we must look at it. What is Les Herbiers worth ?

Count. The little piece of ground has no value ; even weeds refuse to grow there.

Countess. But there's the house.

Count. You'd better say the barrack. The walls are crumbling to pieces. The doors rotten—the roof—why, when it rains, Claude and his family are obliged to carry all the pots and pans to the garret to catch the water. That is an exact description of the Abbé le Roux's mansion.

Countess. Are not these Claudes relations of the Abbé ?

Count. Yes, they are relations of his, and the laziest creatures in the country—no order, no system, and dirty. Nobody else would ever have been willing to live in such a miserable hole.

Countess. How much does he rent it for ?

Count. What rent could he ask for such a place ? He gives it for nothing, and really he couldn't have the impudence to ask more.

Countess. Well, now tell me what you think this little paradise is worth ? Three thousand francs ? Do you think that is too much ?

Count. Three thousand francs ! Why, that's triple—quadruple what it's worth.

Countess. Really ?

Count. I assure you it is.

Countess. Then I am afraid you will scold me, for I have already offered it to our worthy Abbé.

Count. You have offered the Abbé the three thousand francs ? How imprudent !

Countess. Don't be alarmed. I have managed very cautiously. Ledoyen, your notary, was to sound the Abbé Derval first.

Count. The Abbé Derval ! a blond, curly-haired little fellow, isn't he ?

Countess. Precisely. He has a delightful voice—a voice that goes to the soul. He is very clever, and he in his turn will sound the Abbé le Roux. After which, Ledoyen will come in. You see that is very simple. I shouldn't be surprised if the affair is set-

tled at this moment ! [*Looking at clock.*] I'm surprised that Ledoyen is not here now—it was agreed that he should return with the reply immediately.

Count. That will be the saving of me, my dear Jeanne ; although three thousand francs seems to me rather . . . However we'll put that in the general expenses ; but why didn't you tell me this before ? Still, I won't blame you, as the result is for the best.

Countess. Don't let us cry victory too soon.

Count. It will be very curious if he refuses that price ; but you ought to have told me of this sooner.

Countess. You were so overwhelmed with your affairs, so uneasy and nervous—why should I have added to your troubles ? I wanted to act like the good fairy, who overcomes all difficulties with a stroke of her wand. Ah, my dear, we women are born diplomats. You break, we untie ; that's the reason we have such small fingers—[*she looks at her hand, smiling*].

Count [*kissing her hand*]. Ah, dearest Jeanne, you are just the companion for a politician.

Countess. Listen ! don't you hear footsteps ? It is Ledoyen ; it is he, I am sure !

Count. We are saved !

SCENE II.

THE SAME—LEDOYEN.

Count. Well, Monsieur Ledoyen, well?

Countess. It is settled, I suppose. Speak! speak!

Ledoyen [*panting and making signs that he is out of breath*]... I—I have—run.

Count. That's nothing; he consents to the three thousand francs, doesn't he?

Ledoyen. First—I—have——

Count. Are there any mortgages?

Ledoyen. First, I went to see the Abbé yesterday evening——

Countess. The Abbé Derval? Very well. Then——

Ledoyen. Who was not at home.

Count. Not at home? Why not—at such a time?

Countess. To the point!

Ledoyen. He was—with the Cardinal, who is ill.

Count. Ill? Am *I* ill?

Countess [*interrupting*]. His lordship ill! Not seriously, I hope.

Ledoyen. Very seriously.

Countess. Oh, good heavens! and then you waited for the Abbé Derval?

Ledoyen. Until eleven o'clock. In fact——

Countess. Then you succeeded in speaking with him, and——

Ledoyen. Yes, and he understood very well—he is a charming person, this young Abbé.

Countess. Isn't he? Go on, Monsieur Ledoyen, go on.

Ledoyen. It was agreed that he should go this very morning after mass to see the Abbé le Roux, and that I should meet him there and conclude the bargain.

Countess. And you went, and the affair is arranged ?

Ledoyen. I was at the Abbé's at half-past ten ; he is indeed a charming man.

Count. But what did he say ?

Ledoyen. I had to wait until noon, my dear Count, as he was detained by the bedside of the Cardinal.

Countess. You assured him, I hope, of the interest we take in the reverend father's illness ?

Ledoyen. Certainly, my dear Countess.

Count. Well, yes or no ?

Countess. Did he accept ?

Ledoyen. But—I don't know.

Count and Countess. You don't know ?

Ledoyen [*smiling*]. But everything tends to show me that my mission was not unsuccessful, and . . . [*after fumbling in his pocket he draws out a letter*] and this letter, which the Abbé le Roux begged me to give you, doubtless contains his acceptance.

Count. Well, give it to me, then.

Countess. You have kept us in horrible suspense for a quarter of an hour.

Count [*while Ledoyen assumes an air of importance*]. The dear Abbé does things according to rule. It looks like an official document. [*He opens the letter, and the others approach with an anxious air ; reading.*] “Monsieur le Comte, there is but one kind of mouthpiece for our cornet-à-piston. Therefore, according to your wishes, the bearer of this letter

will have the honor of submitting to you the model which we generally adjust to the speaking trumpet, for which a patent..." What does this mean? Oh, yes, I know, it is the answer from Saxe & Co. It is about the music for the fire brigade.

Ledoyen. Oh! A thousand pardons. I got them mixed [*he searches his pockets*]. This letter was handed to me by a gentleman waiting in the ante-room, and who begged me to hand it to you. Here is the other letter, the Abbé le Roux's [*he gives the Count a very small three-cornered note*].

Count [*reading with emotion*]. "Dear Count, the excellent Abbé Derval tells me of the great anxiety you feel about the dear Cardinal's deplorable state. His horrible sufferings have somewhat abated this morning, and I hope to escape for a moment and be able to give you the particulars of this sad event which calls for your pious solicitude. Yours, etc. [*All three look at each other stupefied.*]

Countess. Is that all?

Count. It is incomprehensible.

Ledoyen. I am completely astonished [*getting near the letter*]. You'll allow me to look at it?

Count. But—look for yourself, Ledoyen. I think I know how to read.

Ledoyen [*quickly*]. P. T. O., Count, P. T. O.

Countess. He is going mad.

Ledoyen. Please turn over.

Count [*turning the page and putting on his glasses*]. Oh, there is a postscript. [*Reads.*] "But what is this the excellent Abbé Derval tells me? It appears

you have taken a fancy to the poor little cottage in which my old father died. I can hardly believe, my dear Count, that my little house could have attracted your attention for an instant ; and I am more inclined to think that this is one of those innocent jokes of which the good Abbé Derval is quite capable."

Countess. Is that all ?

Count. There is not another word. [*Severely, to the Notary.*] By heavens, Master Notary, this kind of joking is not to my taste ; you treat the interests of your clients rather cavalierly.

Ledoyen. I protest, monsieur, against the imputations of this letter.

Count. What, sir ! You have confided to you a most important and delicate mission—a mission on which depend the gravest interests, those of the entire country, and at a critical moment too, when I am overcome with fatigue and only sustained by excessive use of black coffee—and you betray the confidence placed in you.

Countess. Your duty, Master Notary, was to bring us a definite answer.

Ledoyen. I am deeply grieved, madam. I swear to you by all that I hold most sacred, that I fulfilled this mission with all the zeal of which I am capable. Not only did I sound the Abbé Derval, but I had a long conference with the Abbé le Roux, when he spoke of the sale of Les Herbiers most seriously, and, I venture to say, with perfect tact. When he heard the sum that was offered he smiled pleasantly, and

said hurriedly, in a low voice, "The price is a matter of small consequence, very small consequence." He then wrote this letter, which he begged me to take to you. How could I suppose that this paper contained anything but a formal acceptance of your offer? Ah! Monsieur le Comte, I feel deeply your lack of confidence in me.

Count [*walking up and down*]. But I, too, my dear Notary, you see my situation is intolerable. Played with! fooled! trampled on! [*he goes to the window and raises curtain.*] Look! there they are posting my new proclamation, and already fifty ragamuffins are raising a row. I believe they are going to tear it down! Poor country! Sad times! I must have Les Herbiers; I must have a school. [*To Ledoyen.*] Do you hear?

Countess. After such a letter, the Abbé le Roux must soon come here, and then I will take everything into my own hands, my dear Monsieur Ledoyen; but if, contrary to my expectation, he does not come, then no further hesitation! Go at once to him and insist upon an answer. He is not astonished by the offer of three thousand francs; offer him four—five thousand.

Count. But, my dear——

Countess. Go even to six thousand, Ledoyen. Ah! my dear husband, life is a battle in which we must use the weapons we have. The thing is, never to be conquered.

SCENE III.

THE SAME—SERVANT—afterward CLERK from
SAXE & CO.

Servant [*opening the door halfway*]. A person who——

Countess. It's the Abbé le Roux. Didn't I tell you? [*While the Countess is speaking, and the Count and Notary are about to leave, a small man, carrying a large brass instrument, slips under the arm of the Servant who is holding the door partly open, enters, and bows familiarly to everybody.*]

Clerk. I come from Messrs. Saxe & Co., sir, to answer in person your honored letter of the 7th inst.

Count [*after looking at him with astonishment for a moment*]. Our fire brigade complain of the small size of the mouthpieces of their horns, I recollect now I wrote to you. It seems to me that I received a letter on this subject, but it is impossible for me at present to recall the details.

Clerk. Certainly, Monsieur le Comte ! and I have the honor to bring you——

Count [*preoccupied*]. Excuse me. [*He approaches the Countess and Ledoyen, who are talking confidentially.—To Notary.*] Don't offer the whole six thousand at first, you understand [*he goes back to Clerk*].

Clerk. As I said before, I shall have the honor of bringing you the mouthpieces 7—32, with which I am certain you will be satisfied.

Count. That's all right. Will you put those machines on the table ?

Clerk. Moreover, I wish to show you a specimen of our signal-trumpet in G ; orchestral and alarm instrument combined, which will henceforth be indispensable to every well-organized band.

Count. Excuse me, my dear sir, but you see how very busy I am just now.

Servant [*enters*]. Monsieur l'Abbé le Roux.

Countess [*rises quickly and runs to Count*]. Leave me alone with him. Go quickly ! [*Count, still followed by Clerk and Ledoyen, hurries out to the right.*]

SCENE IV.

COUNTESS and ABBÉ LE ROUX.

Countess [*after rapidly arranging her head-dress, advances.—To Abbe, with trembling voice*]. How is the dear Cardinal ?

Abbé. He is slightly better—thanks, madam.

Countess. Thank heaven !

Abbé. It was like a stroke of lightning. The attack came on very suddenly Monday evening, after the Angelus.

Countess. Then you think he is out of danger ? What a load you take from my mind, my dear Abbé ! [*She approaches him, and seems disposed to change the conversation.*]

Abbé. It was like a stroke of lightning, as I said before. The organic functions, too long disturbed, were the real cause of this fearful attack. The alarm quickly spread all over the palace.

Countess. I can readily believe it. What agonies you must have suffered !

Abbé. I ran to the telegraph office ; but his pain becoming more intense, I sent for Doctor Berard, who lives near by. Dr. Berard is a man well thought of, and respectable in every way.

Countess. He must be, moreover, a skillful physician, since he has saved our dear Cardinal ; but I am sorry to revive recollections of such cruel scenes—let us say no more about it.

Abbé. Skillful physician certainly ! but whether he had had no experience in such cases, or whether the great responsibility of such a serious attack made his hand tremble and confused his judgment, I only know that this unfortunate Doctor caused the Cardinal great pain, and did not obtain—*[two or three loud-sounding notes are heard from the trumpet. Abbé makes a movement of fear. Countess screams, but collecting herself immediately, smiles graciously].*

Countess. Do not be alarmed. I know what it is. They are showing the Count an instrument for the fire brigade. It is nothing *[with confidence and vivacity]*. But I am going to scold you, my dear Abbé ; you are very hard upon the good Abbé Derval. The propositions he made to you——

Abbé. The Abbé Derval is a saint, madam. He alone, in the midst of this general despair, retained that clearness of intellect, courage, and presence of mind, which make him the strongest champion of a good cause. Seeing that Dr. Berard had done but little good, we waited—judge of our anxiety—we

waited for the specialist Vincent, to whom I had sent an urgent telegram.

Countess. That was right ; but those propositions, you know—those propositions? They were very important.

Abbé. He only made one, but that was certainly very important. It was to perform the same operation again, which Dr. Berard's want of skill had rendered very much more difficult.

Countess. I am speaking of the propositions made to you by the Abbé Derval, from us, about Les Herbiers.

Abbé. It seems to me he did say something about it ; but, you can well understand, madam, that under such serious circumstances, I did not pay much attention to what was said ; for just at that moment, Vincent could not answer for the Cardinal's life.

Countess. Yes, yes, I understand perfectly how painful such a subject must have been to you, surrounded as you were by such anxious cares. Therefore, perhaps, it would be better to finish this little affair at once and get it off your mind. Here it is in two words. Your property of Les Herbiers, which joins our park, tempts us—tempts us very much. I am frank to a fault. Moreover, I understand nothing about business, so I shall probably manage this affair very clumsily. Now we have taken a fancy to Les Herbiers, and my husband is willing to pay generously for it.

Abbé. Monsieur le Comte does everything generously.

Countess. I understand ; without bargaining [*smiles*]. What Monsieur Ledoyen told you must have convinced you of that.

Abbé. I was so anxious at the time your notary came to me that——

Countess. I scolded him severely for having pressed the subject on you. He must have offered the three or four thousand francs with the brutality of a business agent. It was a very large sum, I must say, considering the small value of your little place ; still, that was no reason.

Abbé. Questions of money are not in my line, and to one constituted as I am, the subject is positively repulsive.

Countess [*offering him her hand*]. How well I can sympathize with you ! What did Ledoyen offer you ? three, four, five thousand ? I don't remember exactly ; and, besides, what does it matter ? [*In low and confidential voice.*] The Count is able to pay. Name the price yourself, my dear Abbé, and let us conclude the bargain quickly, that there may no longer be a question of money between us, which, I confess, is odious to me.

Abbé [*frankly*]. Let me imitate your frankness, madam. As we advance in age, and lose our interest in worldly things, we cling more to memories of the past ; therefore the offers your notary made me, and with such persistence, I recollect now, troubled without tempting me. Les Herbiers is of little value they tell me——

Countess. Not so little ; for I have offered you six thousand francs for it.

Abbé. Six or eight, I don't know and don't care to know. At the mere thought of parting with that humble dwelling my heart aches. I passed my boyhood there, and it was there that I promised to devote my life to the service of God. I see now the large, airy room with its great stone fireplace, the great oaken beams and thick walls that in my childish imagination I compared to a fortress.

Countess. Time has impaired all that !

Abbé. No, madam, no. Time only revives these sweet memories and makes them more precious to me. I still see my dear old father spending the last hours of his life in the cultivation of his garden, gathering his fruit, and, in spite of his age, finding strength to dig up his potatoes. Excuse these details [*Countess impatient*]. "What good potatoes these are ; the best to be found within ten leagues," he would say, with his sweet smile. Ah ! how well we children agreed with him ! What delightful hours we passed in the old garret ! [*the Countess more impatient.*] And then, our frolics round the fountain from whence flowed such delicious spring-water.

Countess. But, my dear Abbé, there is not the least trace of a fountain there.

Abbé. Sweet memories ! Last year, when I once more saw Les Herbiers, at the time when I had the new roof put on the house——

Countess. It was very badly done, I hear.

Abbé. I felt then how happy I should be to end

my days there, at peace with myself and all the world.

Countess. What, monsieur! You, who are destined to fulfill the highest religious duties!

Abbé. Sell my poor roof!

Countess. Even for—ten thousand francs?

Abbé. What would become of my tenants? Claude and his wife are my relations—the only relations left to me. They have lived there fifteen years, and heaven has blessed their union with six children, whom they bring up with industrious habits and in the fear of God.

Countess. Very touching!—but we can find them another home.

Abbé. Shall I turn them into the high road? Where would they find a home so suitable to them as that of the Herbiers, which I let them have at a nominal rent, not wishing to make money out of my own relations.

Countess. But I tell you, we will find them another home.

Abbé. But I tell you that Claude is an invaluable farmer.

Countess. But I tell you, ten thousand francs, my dear Abbé.

Abbé. I see that I tire you. I forget myself when Claude is the subject. He is so dear to me. Men of his kind are modest and make no parade of their good qualities. Look, madam, at your little farm of La Brèche, which your farmer is just about to leave in such a deplorable state—does that not

prove that the most sensible and intelligent proprietors are sometimes deceived by appearances in the choice of their tenants ?

Countess. I understand and appreciate your views. Well, then, you accept ?

Abbé [*going toward door*]. Taking everything into consideration, let us give up all idea of this sale.

Countess [*in great emotion*]. Why, what do mean ?

Abbé. Or, at least, let us put it off for the present. Give me time to think over it—give me time, too, to prepare my poor relations for the grief they will feel at the idea of leaving their home. The winter will be severe. Let us wait until it has passed.

Countess. Not at all, my dear Abbé, one moment.

Abbé [*opening door*]. It will be wicked of me to remain longer when Monseigneur is lying on his bed of suffering. Countess, with great respect, good morning. [*Bows and exit.*]

SCENE V.

COUNTRESS alone—afterward COUNT and CLERK.

Countess. Gone ! gone, and nothing done !—I must have managed very badly. What shall I do ? What can I do now ?

Count [*enters followed closely by Clerk. Turns quickly toward him*]. For heaven's sake, sir, go ! Send me a dozen—two dozen of them, if you choose—only leave me in peace !

Clerk [*putting instrument under arm, seizes his note-book and writes.*] One dozen in G, another dozen in A. Your orders shall be promptly executed, sir. [*Bows.*] I have the honor——

Count. Good morning.

[*Exit Clerk.*]

SCENE VI.

COUNT and COUNTESS.

Count. Well, is it arranged? [*Countess thoughtfully shakes her head.*] Then all is lost! I do not know how I shall be able to resist all these attacks. Are you aware that the time is approaching when the committees meet? The most alarming accounts come to me from every side—fortunately the fireworks are here. They will cause a diversion in my favor. I have the mouthpieces too. Nothing is talked of but this miserable school. Bets are being laid whether it will be secular or not. I am turned into ridicule. I am insulted. One of the men employed in putting up my proclamation is covered with bruises. Never has such an excitement been seen. Secular! I ask nothing better. Am I not a layman myself?

Countess. Ten thousand francs even won't satisfy him, and he wants our farm of La Brèche secured to his cousin Claude.

Count. He is mad! It is ridiculous, absurd... I consent to it. I will give whatever he wants—fifteen—twenty thousand francs if he wishes. I am nearly crazy with the throbbing in my head.

Countess [*striking her forehead*]. The evil can be remedied. Sit down, take a pen and write.

Count [*sits, takes up pen, rings hand-bell*]. Write to whom, my dear?

Countess. To the Abbé le Roux. We must have him back at all hazards. Let me dictate a note to you—something impressive and earnest. [*Dictating.*] “My dear Abbé, my wife has misunderstood my intentions. . . .”

Count. “You have misunderstood my intentions.” [*To Servant, who enters.*] Get a hot foot-bath ready for me. [*Writing.*] “My intentions,” but what intentions?

Countess. Never mind. [*Dictating.*] “I do not wish this misunderstanding to last a moment longer. . . .”

Servant. With mustard in it, sir?

Count [*to Servant*]. Yes, and some very strong coffee. [*Writing.*] “that this misunderstanding with mustard should last”—[*crumpling letter and throwing it away*]. This damned fool making me write such idiotic things, such ridiculous trash in a letter of the most serious importance! [*Takes another sheet of paper and writes.*] Now I am ready, my dear.

Countess [*dictating*]. “Come back, my dear Abbé, I wish to open my heart to you.”

Count. I don't understand a word of it—“open my heart to you.”

Countess. “And correct the impressions caused by the thoughtlessness of my wife.”

Count. But, my dear, I accuse you of thoughtlessness in this letter?

Countess. Certainly. [*She rings hand-bell.*] I will explain it all to you later. [*To Servant, who enters.*] Take this letter to the Abbé le Roux ; you must run after him ; not a moment's delay. See that he is here in fifteen minutes [*exit Servant*], and I will answer for it he will be.

Count. Will you, at least, let me know how I am to open my heart to the good Abbé ?

Countess. Simply open your purse to him ! The purchase of Les Herbiers is only an affair of money. [*Knocking heard at door, left.*] I will leave you ; keep up your courage, don't despair. [*Exit.*]

Count. Who can be coming from that direction ? [*Aloud.*] Come in.

SCENE VII.

BOIS DE GROSLAU, the Prefect—COUNT.

Count. Ah ! welcome, my dear Prefect !

Prefect. I was obliged to come by the park, although it was the longest way. Excuse my coming in without announcement, but I did not wish to be seen ; my presence here at this time might injure you.

Count. Your presence injure me ?

Prefect. Yes, such caution is altogether exceptional ; anywhere else we could act without fear, but here we are never safe, the minds of the people

are troubled and excited. In a word, the situation is most critical.

Count. Do you think it favorable to me ?

Prefect. Not exactly, my dear Count. I feel very doubtful.

Count. It was only three days ago that you assured me.

Prefect. Three days ago everything was for the best, that is true ; now, nothing is lost, but all depends on the committees. In the present state of public feeling, the decision of the committees will be life or death to you.

Count. This is most disastrous !

Prefect. Most disastrous ! but we must act promptly ! Go this very evening to the meeting of the committees, and when the discussion becomes warm, then proclaim boldly your intentions in regard to the school. You have already delayed too long.

Count. I have delayed too long—and there is the Church party . . . If I should proclaim it religious ?

Prefect. Oh ! that will do you very little harm. But at all events proclaim it ; you must proclaim it.

Count. Fortunately, I am perfectly independent, and can do as I choose ; strike right or left. What do we want, after all ?

Prefect. To have a majority.

Count. And by this means to obtain the welfare of the country. We care very little for the means if we can but obtain our object.

Prefect. I have read your views with extreme pleasure. Elevated in its ideas ! [*searches in pocket.*]

Grand in style ! Ah ! here it is ! [*unfolds paper.*] It is very remarkable ; and, if you will permit me to make a few notes in pencil—it is only . . .

Count. My opinion is, that in addressing a crowd, it is always better to maintain an air of great dignity.

Prefect. Quite right !

Count. And to avoid all petty consideration of person and party.

Prefect. You have obtained this result—allow me to show you several passages. Let me see !—let me see ! [*Reads very rapidly, like a notary reading a deed.*] “Gentlemen, one word more : in offering myself for your suffrages, I do not yield, I repeat—” That isn’t it ! “Born in the country, living amongst you . . .” Very good ! very good ! That is not it ! “The unwavering devotion—unwavering—unwavering . . .”

Count [*who has shown impatience throughout the reading*]. I wish to remark that the rapid style of your reading . . .

Prefect. Time presses, these proofs must be corrected this evening.

Count. I know that—but very often the style of reading will entirely change the meaning, or at any rate . . . [*Declaiming.*] “Gentlemen, one word more: in offering myself for your suffrages—” You see that I do not lower myself. I maintain that dignity of which I spoke to you just now ; but if you say, “Gentlemen, one word more in offering myself for your suffrages—” That is quite different ! I appear to be making a concession, which I never do. I appear to

descend to a discussion of details, to a familiar explanation. I invite reply.

Prefect. I feel that forcibly.

Count. Not as forcibly as you ought, though. This speech is written with great care, and I can safely say that each sentence has been weighed carefully, and the diction and elocution must not be neglected. Pardon me for insisting, but it is a matter of great importance. It must not be neglected, or the effect will be lost entirely.

Prefect. I trust to your eloquence, my dear Count, to give to this address all the brilliancy. . . Stop, here is the sentence I wished to draw your attention to : "Too long our unhappy country, like a frail bark,"—

Count. I said unhappy in the sense of unfortunate ; unfortunate country in a political view, of course—country, victim of intrigues and evil passions, unfortunate country in fact. Unhappy country, exposed to storms and tempests, and then, naturally enough, the simile of the bark presented itself to me.

Prefect. I willingly admit it, but——

Count. Go on—everything is well weighed, and each link in the chain of logic is perfect.

Prefect. "Like a frail bark, buffeted about by the dangerous waves of anarchy. Let us consolidate the foundation——"

Count. After these words, "dangerous waves of anarchy," there is a pause. The mind is as it were overwhelmed by that striking and terrible picture, "the dangerous waves of anarchy !" What remembrances ! what lessons in the past ! what menaces

for the future ! There is power enough in that to take away one's breath—make one gasp, as it were.

Prefect. I read it rapidly, that we might lose no time.

Count. You are wrong, my dear friend. There are certain things one must never read rapidly. [*With a condescending smile.*] Go on ! “Let us consolidate the foundation.”

Prefect. “Let us consolidate the immovable foundation of the throne.” Had we not better erase “immovable” ?

Count [*annoyed*]. Why ?

Prefect. If we are to consolidate the foundation, it is because it is movable ; and if it is movable [*Count buttons his coat—cold and dignified*], why, then, it is not immovable.

Count. Excuse me—I thought I had accomplished a serious work when I wrote these pages, and, frankly, I imagined myself secure from this hypercriticism. A few days ago, I said to the Duke of Planskaski, one of the cleverest and most refined of men . . .

Prefect. Skaski—don't know him.

Count. Polish family. I said to him, “My dear Duke, the spirit of criticism and analysis which undermines our epoch denotes crumbling and decay.” The Duke replied with sadness, “You are right.” I will add, my dear Prefect [*he becomes animated*], that not a discourse, not a page of our literature can stand against the corrosive action of the modern critic—not a page, not a line, not a word. This bitter and hostile analysis from any one, either en-

rages or makes me smile ; coming from you, it grieves me.

Prefect. But you exaggerate strangely. The question is simply of an incorrect word, which was, of course, unintentional.

Count. These unintentional errors often lead to sad results. In 1815, dirt was found mixed with our gunpowder. It was alleged then that this was an unintentional error.

Prefect. Excuse me, dear Count. We will leave the adjective "immovable," since you are so tenacious about it.

Count. I defy you to find another word which would so forcibly express my idea.

Prefect [*reading*]. "Let us consolidate the...immovable—foundation of the throne." That's very well. "Let us form—a fascine, if I may be allowed the expression, of our convictions, on the summit of which, as on an immense pedestal, the State floats in full sail towards its glorious destinies." Don't you find that a rather forced figure of speech ?

Count. Not at all. I find it very good. I would say the same if I were not the author. It is very good.

Prefect. I must say I should have preferred something more——

Count. What ! You curtail, you destroy, you massacre my sentence, and then pretend to judge of it ?

Prefect. Oh no, I assure you——

Count. Excuse me, but you have cut it short.

Prefect. You can make a point——

Count. What do I care for your point ! It is the development, the chain of ideas, the arrangement of phrases. Here is what I say. [*He declaims.*] “The State which swims in full sail——”

Prefect. Which floats——

Count. Swims or floats—I don’t care—in full sail. It is a figure of speech, “towards its glorious destinies. There are people who wish to destroy your confidence by evil words. On certain questions one must speak with boldness.”

Prefect. On what questions ?

Count [*declaiming*]. “On all questions one must speak with boldness, and throw light upon them. Peace, gentlemen, means prosperity, as war means greatness. There is not a soul really French who will not tremble with pride before this double truth. Electors of the seventh district, there is no prosperity without greatness—there is no greatness without prosperity.” [*Rests for a moment with hand on breast, facing Prefect, at whom he looks inquiringly.*]

Prefect. There is great brilliancy in that !

Count. And warmth. That is absolutely necessary. It is a collective view, which sums up very well . . .

Prefect. Assuredly.

Count. Isn’t it ? And in a style . . .

Prefect. Pure.

Count. I think so !

Prefect. But time presses, my dear Count—presses us cruelly. Trust me, and do not send out this

second address until after the meeting of the committee.

Count. I am not afraid of the committees, and, as I say further on, "No more subterfuges. Confidence is the beacon-light of strong minds" . . .

Prefect. Enough talking—let us act. Make your appearance at the end of the meeting, and baptize your school boldly and simply. That is everything, believe me. I must leave—my presence is absolutely necessary at the Prefecture. Good by, dear Count. [Exit.

SCENE VIII.

COUNT—SERVANT.

Count [*to Servant, who enters*]. What is it, Joseph? [*In an undertone.*] There is no greatness without prosperity, there is no prosperity without greatness, but—the Prefect is a fool. [*Seeing Servant.*] Eh! eh! what do you want?

Servant. Your foot-bath is ready, sir.

Count. Well, take it yourself. I don't want it now. I feel better, a great deal better; the approach of a decisive struggle raises my courage and gives me double strength; it seems to me there is something providential in it.

Servant. His honor the Mayor has come to ask you——

Count. Didn't you tell him that I was very much engaged?

Servant. Yes, sir, and he excused himself and left . . .

Count. He is considerate—I will say that for him.

Servant. He begged you would send him the tex. . . tex . . . the text.

Count. What text?

Servant. The text of the impromptu speech for the fire brigade.

Count. Good gracious! that's true! I had forgotten the toast that I intended to improvise for the fire brigade dinner.

Servant. The men with the fireworks are down stairs, sir.

Count. Ah! I am glad to hear it. Tell them to wait. [Exit Servant.]

SCENE IX.

COUNT—COUNTESS—LEDOYEN.

Countess [*with animation*]. He is here.

Count. Who?

Countess. The Abbé le Roux. Accomplish this business at any cost, and as quickly as possible.

Count. Oh! I forgot the Abbé!—I'll get even with him.

Ledoyen. Here is the deed in duplicate, ready for the signatures.

Count [*puts deeds in drawer*]. All right!

Countess [*going, followed by Ledoyen, with energetic and graceful gesture*]. Annihilate him!

SCENE X.

COUNT—ABBÉ LE ROUX—SERVANT.

Servant. Monsieur Abbé le Roux.

Abbé [*much moved*]. I have but a moment to stay, as the Cardinal has had a relapse.

Count. Is it possible ?

Abbé. It was very sudden—at least this is what I hear—for I was not able to see our dear Cardinal, having met your servant at the very moment I was about to enter the palace. Nothing less than the touching tone of your note would have made me come back—but you must see that every moment is of importance.

Count. The same with me. I shall be brief, never fear ; let us speak to the point. I have written somewhere that “frankness is the beacon-light of strong minds.” Then let us come to the point. In selling Les Herbiers you wish that Claude’s future should be well secured—I will give him the lease of the farm of La Brèche, that’s done ! Now . . .

Abbé. Don’t let us return to this painful subject, I beg. I have neither the time nor the coolness necessary to deal with such an affair. Why should we hurry matters ? Wait until spring. My heart, my duty calls me to the bedside of our dear Cardinal. Allow me to leave you.

Count. Let me say two words to you. I have a great desire to purchase your property as you know. You profit by my peculiar position ; I don’t blame you, my dear Abbé ; business is business. You profit

by my situation, to make me pay for your little place ten times what it is worth. Very well !

Abbé. Observe, please, that you wish to make a bargain with me ; which, far from being desirable, is actually repugnant to me. The idea alone causes me real grief. Now, in this position of affairs, on what basis do you expect me to estimate the price of this property, if it is not upon the strength of my regrets at parting with it ? [*Sits.*]

Count. No doubt you are justified in so doing—but my great anxiety to make this purchase, will probably not last forever, and the time that you require for reflection, may be dangerous to your interests ; besides, I don't altogether understand this intensity of feeling that you have revived. I acknowledge—I respect even the associations which bind you to the old ruin ; but the love that you feel for it must be very Platonic, for I do not hear of your having seen your ancestral home more than once during the last six years. Excuse my frankness, but time is short.

Abbé. Believe me, my dear Count, the honor you confer on my little place in desiring to possess it, would alone increase its value a hundred-fold.

Count [*laughing*]. Hundred-fold — that's enormous ! absurd ! Come, let us be serious ! [*Gentle voice.*] Les Herbières, you know as well as I do, has no value ; you get nothing from it——

Abbé. Allow me to stop you there. The insignificance of the rent that I have accepted for the last fifteen years, without complaint, far from diminish-

ing the intrinsic value of Les Herbiers, increases it on the contrary.

Count. Explain.

Abbé. Isn't it fair that the capital you offer should repay me for my fifteen years of sacrifice ?

Count. Fifteen years of sacrifice ! Well ! strike out the remembrance of each of these years by a note of one thousand francs, and be done with it ! I act liberally, as you see.

Abbé. You are in a hurry, monsieur ?

Count. Good heavens ! if I were not in a hurry, do you think I would make such offers to you ? fifteen thousand francs !

Abbé. It is too much !——

Count. That don't matter.

Abbé. Too much—for me, not enough for you, monsieur. How can I explain to myself your great eagerness for this purchase, but by supposing that you feel very sure of realizing considerable profit from some intrinsic value in my property entirely unknown to me at present ? Can I forget that in the little tree which I cede to you, there may be a powerful oak, from which, no doubt, you will draw immense profit ?

Count. But then——

Abbé. Do you think that I could have the heart to deprive my humble heirs of this little fortune ? or, in default of heirs, the poor, who are our especial charge. [*Rises.*] But the Cardinal's condition will not permit me to remain here longer ; my respects, monsieur. [*Bows.*]

Count. Abbé—twenty thousand francs. I will go to twenty thousand ; and now, I've done !

Abbé [*with reserve*]. You are very liberal, monsieur.

Count. Pardon my brusqueness, my dear sir. I have promised to open my heart to you. Well then, twenty thousand francs, but not a penny more.

Abbé. You speak frankly ; I will imitate your example. The same proposals you do me the honor to make for my little property, were made a short time ago by the " Brothers of Christian Schools," who finding Les Herbiers remarkably well suited to their purpose, wished to found an establishment there—shall I tell you ?

Count [*aside*]. That must never be !

Abbé. Shall I tell you ? In spite of the excellence of the intention, I was as weak with the good brothers as I am with you ; and even now, between these two offers, equally liberal, I am still painfully undecided.

Count. Do you think the good brothers would give you money down on the spot, on the execution of the deed, twenty-five thousand good francs, as I am ready to do ? [*Triumphant attitude.*]

Abbé. Poor dear brothers ! of what are they not capable, when it is a question of helping the poor, enlightening the ignorant, and supporting the feeble ? [*Bowing.*] I have the honor——

Count [*excited*]. Don't you know, Abbé, that a cord, however strong, will break at last, when too much strained, and that, by pushing a joke too far, one is exposed...

Abbé [*coldly*]. I am detaining you, monsieur.

Count [*aside*]. I must be calm. [*Aloud.*] Come, Monsieur l'Abbé, how much was it I offered you ? for really I have lost my head in the midst of this confusion. Twenty-five thousand francs, I think.

Abbé. Or thirty thousand, I am not quite sure.

Count. Wasn't it rather twenty-eight ?

Abbé. So far as I can trust my recollection, it was thirty thousand you said.

Count. Well, if I said so, let it be thirty thousand. Now sign, the deed is ready. [*Takes papers from drawer.*]

Abbé [*with deep sigh*]. Ah ! what this costs me !

Count. And me, too ! [*Looks at watch and signs papers.*] Now, it is your turn.

Abbé. But there is no hurry—

Count. Excuse me, but let us finish this ; you have only to sign, and there is an end of it.

Abbé. Yes, there's an end of it. A stroke of the pen is enough to break the tenderest ties.

Count. And to make you rich at the same time. You surely don't hesitate ?

Abbé. Oh no ! I don't hesitate, but I should like to read the deed. I am not familiar with this sort of thing. I should like to think it over a moment.

Servant [*enters*]. The men about the fireworks wish to speak to you, monsieur ; and the Mayor wishes—

Count. Very well. [*Aside.*] Can't they leave me at peace five minutes ? [*To Abbé.*] You wish to read these papers. I understand—it's the simplest thing

in the world, my dear Abbé. Go into this room while I receive these people. It won't detain me a moment, and then you can come back and sign.

Abbé. It won't take me long. [*Goes to other room.*]

Count. Show the workmen in.

Servant. They don't wish to disturb you, monsieur. They only wish to know if they shall put the eagle over the fountain.

Count. The eagle over the fountain [*thinking, aside*]. If I promise to make it secular, the eagle has no meaning. On the other side, my proclamation. [*Aloud.*] Tell them to finish the fountain, and put the eagle in the coach-house, until I have decided. See that the frame is strong enough.

Servant. Very well, monsieur. The Mayor is below ; he wishes the tex—text for the impromptu speech.

Count. He shall have it in a moment. [*Exit Servant.*]

SCENE XI.

COUNT, alone.

Count [*seats himself at his desk, and searches among papers*]. That speech ought to be here somewhere—ah, here it is. [*Reads.*] “Sapeurs Pompiers : I come here without pomp”—[*he writes*—]probable laughter. One has to be very literal with the worthy Mayor. [*Reading*—]“without pomp, but with brotherly feeling, to express to you the joy I feel in

finding myself amongst you again. We all wish the prosperity of the country, and extinction of ignorance ; that the roads in the neighborhood should be kept in good order, etc. In offering you a roller for crushing stones, easily handled"—[*writes*] prolonged applause. "Don't thank me, my friends, etc., etc. In creating a large school, well-conducted"—[*writes*] endless applause ; "enough, I beg of you." [*Noise at door.*] What is it now ? Come in !

SCENE XII.

COUNT—COUNTESS [*furious*—LEDOYEN [*out of breath*].

Ledoyen [*agitated*]. The committee——

Count. I'll go at once. It is time, isn't it ? [*To Countess.*] I have concluded the affair with the Abbé.

Ledoyen. Alas ! monsieur ! alas !

Countess. Concluded ? for how much ?

Count. Never mind the amount—thirty thousand francs.

Ledoyen. I have just left the committees. From the opening of the meeting the tumult was great. I do not know under what influence—alas !——

Count. Speak, Ledoyen, speak !

Ledoyen. At the very opening of the discussion, your name was scratched angrily from the list. They were like madmen. I can find no other term to apply to them, they were so excited.

Count. Reflect on what you say, Ledoyen, for, from your account, my election will be absolutely lost.

Ledoyen. It is lost, monsieur, without a doubt !

Countess. This is an insult to your name.

Count. Even before hearing me they——

Ledoyen. It is a conspiracy ! an infernal trick !

Count. Silence, sir ! Poor country ! Will you always be the victim of conspirators ? This is cruel ! cruel !

Countess. Thirty thousand francs ! But why were you in such a hurry about that signature ? The Abbé le Roux——

Count. Hush ! he is in the next room.

Countess. Then it is not entirely settled yet ?

Count. I have signed, but he has not.

Countess. Thank heaven ! Leave me alone here—leave me, there is not a moment to lose.

Count. Come, Ledoyen. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE XIII.

COUNTRESS, alone—then ABBÉ LE ROUX.

Countess. Ah, if I were a man ! [*She goes to the door, knocks gently, smiling.*] Are you there, Monsieur l' Abbé ?

Abbé [*from other room*]. Yes, madam. [*Door opens, enter Abbé.*]

Countess. Do you know that the Cardinal has been

taken very ill? He has had a very serious relapse; very serious, they say.

Abbé [*calmly*]. Luckily the Cardinal has a very strong constitution.

Countess. Undoubtedly, and then the report is probably exaggerated; but I don't wish to keep you at a time when your presence is so necessary to him. [*Looking at papers in Abbé's hands.*] What is that? Oh, I know! they are the papers for the sale of your property. The Count has just told me something about it—excuse his persistence—but he was entirely ignorant of the condition of the Cardinal. This evening, or to-morrow, we will talk it over again.

Abbé. Don't be alarmed, madam, this attack was expected.

Countess. Ah, so much the better. I am sensitive to a fault; and when I was informed that the Cardinal was worse, and that you were detained here by my husband, I was beside myself.

Abbé. Calm yourself.

Countess. It is beyond my control.

Abbé. I know very well how delicate and refined natures . . . but nothing of importance keeps me here now, and if you will allow me, I will return immediately to the bedside of our dear sufferer.

Countess. That's right, fly, my dear Abbé—business can wait—the Cardinal before everything.

Abbé [*putting paper on desk*]. Will you be kind enough to tell the Count that I have left the deed on his desk?

Countess. Yes, yes—never mind that—to-morrow, or whenever you choose.

Abbé [*signing*]. They are signed, madam. I found writing materials in the next room [*he carefully folds the duplicate and puts in pocket*], and as monsieur was in a great hurry, I placed my name at the bottom of the papers, hard as the sacrifice was.

Countess. You, my dear Abbé, made a victim by the Count's act? Ah! how I regret this inconceivable obstinacy of his.

Abbé. Alas! madam, your precious sympathy comes too late to console my grief.

Countess. It is never too late to remedy an evil. Why did you not call me to your rescue?

Abbé. But you yourself insisted upon my selling my poor little property.

Countess. Did I really insist? it is possible. But could I foresee that this insistance would affect you so much? Why didn't you tell me everything? Women, you know, are good advisers in delicate affairs of the heart; I would have understood you, have aided you, have... I would have spared you all these remorseful feelings. Poor Abbé!

Abbé. It was with bitter emotion that I signed this deed, which separated me forever from my humble roof; but I asked myself whether there were not in my grief symptoms of too great attachment to the things of this world. Perhaps Providence has sent me this trial to prove me; and I found, in more elevated thoughts, forgetfulness of my miseries.

Countess. Your grief distresses me greatly; but

why despair? Should a bargain made in the midst of such trouble and anxiety bind you? Can a stroke of the pen destroy a beautiful future, efface a whole past, make you renounce your homestead with its shady groves, and the orchard so fresh and so fertile [*the Abbé sighs*], and the fountain with its murmuring water?... Trust to me and this wicked dream shall be destroyed forever.

Abbé. Sweet and persuasive as your influence may be with the Count, the victory will not be so easy as you think; and I would not for the world expose you, madam, to a refusal which you, in your great goodness, cannot believe possible.

Countess. I answer for everything; let us destroy this fatal signature. Say the word, and I promise you the thing shall be done.

Abbé. Let us accept facts, madam, and change nothing that human laws have sanctioned. I must hasten to the Cardinal. [*On the point of starting.*] Dare I beg you to give to the Count a piece of important information, and which, in his hurry to conclude the affair of Les Herbiers, he did not give me time to communicate to him, as I intended? That is, that the electoral committees, seized with vertigo no doubt, have decided unanimously to reject as candidate...

Countess. My husband. I knew it, thank you!

Abbé. I heard it yesterday morning by accident. Alas! madam, I condole with you sincerely.

[*Exit Abbé.*]

SCENE XIV.

COUNTESS—COUNT, very dignified—SERVANT.

Count. Well, madam, well ?

Countess. Here is the deed, all in order.

Servant. The clerk, from Saxe & Co., wishes to speak to monsieur on important business.

Count. Tell him to go to the devil !

Curtain falls.

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